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SERMONS

ON SEVERAL

SUBJECTS *and* OCCASIONS,

By the most Reverend

Dr. *JOHN TILLOTSON*,

LATE

Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

VOLUME *the* SIXTH.

LONDON:

Printed for *R. Ware*, *A. Ward*, *J.* and *P. Knapton*, *T. Longman*, *R. Hett*, *C. Hitch*, *J. Hodges*, *S. Aisley*, *J.* and *R. Tonson*, *J.* and *H. Pemberton*, and *J. Rivington*.

M DCC XLII.

SERMON LXXXV.

The love of GOD to men, in the incarnation of CHRIST.

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1 JOHN iv. 9.

In this was manifeſted the love of GOD *towards us, becauſe that* GOD *ſent his only-begotten* SON *into the world, that we might live through him.*

THESE words contain a clear and evident demonſtration of the love of GOD to us; "In this was manifeſted the love of GOD "towards us;" that is, by this it plainly appears, that GOD had a mighty love for us, "that he ſent "his only begotten SON into the world, that we "might live through him." In which we may conſider this threefold evidence of GOD's love to mankind. SERM. LXXXV. Preached in the chapel of Lambeth-houſe on Chriſtmas-Day, 1691.

I. That he ſhould be pleaſed to take our caſe into conſideration, and to concern himſelf for our happineſs.

II. That he ſhould deſign ſo great a benefit to us, which is here expreſt by life; "that we might live "through him."

III. That he was pleaſed to uſe ſuch a means for the obtaining and procuring of this benefit for us; "he "ſent his only begotten SON into the world, that we "might live through him." Each of theſe ſingly is

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a great evidence of GOD's love to us; much more all of them together.

I. It is a great evidence of the love of GOD to mankind, that he was pleased to take our case into consideration, and to concern himself for our happiness. Nothing does more commend an act of kindness, than if there be great condescension in it. We use to value a small favour, if it be done to us by one that is far above us, more than a far greater done to us by a mean and inconsiderable person. This made David to break out into such admiration, when he considered the ordinary providence of GOD towards mankind, "LORD, what is man, that thou art mind-"ful of him! or the son of man, that thou shouldst "consider him!" This is a wonderful condescension indeed, for GOD to be mindful of man.

At the best we are but his creatures, and upon that very account at an infinite distance from him; so that were not he infinitely good, he would not be concerned for us, who are so infinitely beneath the consideration of his love and pity. Neither are we of the highest rank of creatures; we are much below the angels, as to the excellency and perfection of their beings; so that if GOD had not had a peculiar pity and regard to the sons of men, he might have placed his affection and care upon a much nobler order of creatures than we are, and so much the more miserable, because they fell from a higher step of happiness, I mean the lost angels; but yet for reasons best known to his infinite wisdom, GOD past by them, and was pleased to consider us. This the apostle to the Hebrews takes notice of, as an argument of GOD's peculiar and extraordinary love to mankind, "that "he

" he ſent his SON, not to take upon him the nature " of angels, but of the ſeed of Abraham."

Now that he, who is ſo far above us, and after that we by wilful tranſgreſſion had loſt ourſelves, had no obligation to take care of us, but what his own goodneſs laid upon him, that he ſhould concern himſelf ſo much for us, and be ſo ſolicitous for our recovery, this is a great evidence of his kindneſs and good-will to us, and cannot be imagined to proceed from any other cauſe.

II. Another evidence of GOD's great love to us, is, that he was pleaſed to deſign ſo great a benefit for us. This the ſcripture expreſſeth to us by life; and it is uſual in ſcripture to expreſs the beſt and moſt deſirable things by life; becauſe as it is one of the greateſt bleſſings, ſo it is the foundation of all other enjoyments: and therefore the apoſtle uſeth but this one word to expreſs to us all the bleſſings and benefits of CHRIST's coming into the world; " GOD " ſent his only-begotten SON into the world, that we " might live through him."

And the expreſſion is very proper in our caſe; becauſe life ſignifies the reparation of all that which was loſt by the fall of man. For man by his wilful degeneracy and apoſtaſy from GOD, is ſunk into a ſtate of ſin and miſery, both which the ſcripture is wont to expreſs by death. In reſpect of our ſinful ſtate we are ſpiritually dead; and in reſpect of the puniſhment and miſery due to us for our ſins, we are judicially dead, dead in law; " for the wages of ſin is " death." Now GOD hath ſent his SON into the world, that in both theſe reſpects " we might live " through him."

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1. We were ſpiritually dead, dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, Eph. ii. 1, 2. "You hath "he quickened who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, "wherein in times paſt ye walked according to the "courſe of this world." Every wicked man, tho' in a natural ſenſe he be alive, yet in a moral ſenſe he is dead. So the apoſtle ſpeaking of thoſe "who "live in ſinful luſts and pleaſures, ſays of them, "that they are dead while they live," 1 Tim. v. 6. What corrupt humours are to the body, that ſin is to the ſoul, their diſeaſe and their death. Now GOD ſent his SON to deliver us from this death, by renewing our nature, and mortifying our luſts; by reſtoring us to the life of grace and holineſs, "and deſtroying "the body of ſin in us, that henceforth we ſhould not "ſerve ſin." And that this is a great argument of the mighty love of GOD to us, the apoſtle tells us, Eph. ii. 4, 5. "GOD who is rich in mercy, for his "great love wherewith he loved us, even when we "were dead in ſins, hath quickened us together with "CHRIST." It is an argument of the richneſs of GOD's mercy, and of his great love to us to recover us out of this ſad and deplorable caſe. It is a kindneſs infinitely greater, than to redeem us from the moſt wretched ſlavery, or to reſcue us from the moſt dreadful and cruel temporal death; and yet we ſhould value this as a favour and benefit, that could never be ſufficiently acknowledged: but GOD hath ſent his SON to deliver us from a worſe bondage, and a more dreadful kind of death; ſo that well might the apoſtle aſcribe this great deliverance of mankind from the ſlavery of our luſts, and the death of ſin, to the boundleſs mercy and love of GOD to us. "GOD who is

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"rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he "loved us, hath quickened us together with CHRIST, "even when we were dead in sins;" when our case was so desperate as could well be imagined; then was GOD pleased to undertake this great cure, and to provide such a remedy, as cannot fail to be effectual for our recovery, if we will but make use of it. SERM. LXXXV.

2. We were likewise judicially dead, dead in law, being condemned by the just sentence of it. So soon as ever we sinned, eternal death was by the sentence of GOD's law become our due portion and reward; and this being our case, GOD in tender commiseration and pity to mankind, was pleased to send his SON into the world to interpose between the justice of GOD and the demerits of men; and by reversing the sentence that was gone out against us, and procuring a pardon for us, to rescue us from the misery of eternal death; and not only so, but upon the condition of faith and repentance, of obedience and a holy life, to bestow eternal life upon us; and by this means to restore us to a better condition than that from which we were fallen, and to advance us to a happiness greater than that of innocency.

And was not this great love, to design and provide so great a benefit and blessing for us, "to send his SON "JESUS to bless us in turning away every one of us from "our iniquities?" Our blessed SAVIOUR, who came from the bosom of his FATHER, and knew his tender affection and compassion to mankind, speaks of this as a most wonderful and unparallel'd expression of his love to us, John iii. 16. "GOD so loved the "world, that he gave his only-begotten SON." "GOD so loved the world," so greatly, so strangely,

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ſo beyond our biggeſt hopes, nay, ſo contrary to all reaſonable expectations, " as to ſend his only-begot-" ten SON, to ſeek and to ſave the ſinful ſons of " men."

If it had only in general been declared to us, that GOD was about to ſend his SON into the world upon ſome great deſign, and been left to us to conjecture, what his errand and buſineſs ſhould be; how would this have alarmed the guilty conſciences of ſinful men, and filled them with infinite jealouſies and ſuſpicion, with fearful expectations " of wrath " and fiery indignation to conſume them!" For conſidering the great wickedneſs and degeneracy of mankind, what could we have thought, but that ſurely GOD was ſending his SON upon a deſign of vengeance to chaſtiſe a ſinful world, to vindicate the honour of his deſpiſed laws, and to revenge the multiplied affronts which had been offered to the higheſt majeſty of heaven, by his pitiful and ungrateful creatures? Our own guilt would have been very apt to have fill'd us with ſuch imaginations as theſe, that in all likelihood the SON of GOD was coming to judgment, to call the wicked world to an account, to proceed againſt his father's rebels, to paſs ſentence upon them, and to execute the vengeance which they had deſerved. This we might juſtly have dreaded; and indeed conſidering our caſe, how ill we have deſerved at GOD's hands, and how highly we have provoked him; what other weighty matter could we hope for?

But the goodneſs of GOD hath ſtrangely out-done our hopes, and deceived our expectation; ſo it follows in the next words, " GOD ſent not his SON " into

" into the world to condemn the world," (intimating that this we might juſtly have imagin'd and feared) but upon a quite contrary deſign, " that " through him the world might be ſaved." What a ſurprize of kindneſs is here! that inſtead " of " ſending his SON to condemn us, he ſhould ſend " him into the world to ſave us;" to reſcue us from the jaws of death and of hell, from that eternal and intolerable miſery which we had incurred and deſerved!

And if he had proceeded no farther, this had been wonderful mercy and kindneſs: But his love ſtopt not here, it was not contented to ſpare us, and free us from miſery; but was reſtleſs till it had found out a way to bring us to happineſs; " for GOD ſo " loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten " SON, not only that whoſoever believes in him " might not periſh, but might have everlaſting life." This is the ſecond evidence of GOD's great love to us, the greatneſs of the bleſſing and benefit which he had deſigned and provided for us, " that " we might live through him;" not only be delivered from ſpiritual and eternal death, but be made partakers of eternal life.

III. The laſt evidence of GOD's great love to us, which I mentioned, was this, that GOD was pleaſed to uſe ſuch a means, for the obtaining and procuring of this great bleſſing and benefit; " he ſent his " only-begotten SON into the world, that we might " live through him." And this will appear to be great love indeed, if we conſider theſe four things.

1. The perſon whom he was pleaſed to employ upon this deſign, " he ſent his only-begotten SON."

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2. How much he abaſed him, in order to the effecting and accompliſhing this deſign, implied in theſe words, "he ſent him into the world."

3. If we conſider, to whom he was ſent, "to the "world." And,

4. That he did all that voluntarily and freely, out of his mere pity and goodneſs; not conſtrained hereto by any neceſſity, not prevail'd upon by any application or importunity of ours, nor obliged by any benefit or kindneſs from us.

1. Let us conſider the perſon whom GOD was pleaſed to employ in this deſign, "he ſent his only-be-"gotten SON"; no leſs perſon than his own SON, and no leſs dear to him, than his only-begotten SON.

(1.) No leſs perſon than "his own SON;" and the dignity of the perſon that was employed in our behalf, doth ſtrangely heighten and ſet off the kindneſs. What an endearment is it of the mercy of our redemption, that GOD was pleaſed to employ upon this deſign no meaner perſon than "his own "SON, his begotten SON;" ſo he is called in the text, his SON, in ſo peculiar a manner, as no creature is, or can be; the creatures below man are called the works of GOD, but never his children; the angels are in ſcripture call'd the ſons of GOD; and Adam likewiſe is call'd the ſon of GOD, becauſe GOD made him after his own image and likeneſs in holineſs and righteouſneſs, and in his dominion and ſovereignty over the creatures below him; but this title of begotten SON of GOD was never given to any of the creatures, man or angel; "for unto "which of the angels ſaid he at any time, thou art "my SON, this day have I begotten thee," as the apoſtle

apoſtle reaſons, Heb. i. 5. He muſt be a great perſon indeed to whom this title belongs, "of the begotten SON of GOD;" and it muſt be a mighty love indeed which moved GOD to employ ſo great a perſon, on the behalf of ſo pitiful and wretched creatures as we are. It had been a mighty condeſcenſion for GOD to treat with us at all; but that no leſs perſon than his own SON ſhould be the ambaſſador, is an aſtoniſhing regard of heaven to poor ſinful duſt and aſhes. SERM. LXXXV.

(2.) The perſon was as dear to GOD, as he was great, "he was his only-begotten SON." It had been a great inſtance of Abraham's love and obedience to GOD, to have ſacrificed a ſon at his command; but this circumſtance makes it much greater, that it was his only SON; "hereby I know that thou feareſt "GOD (ſays the angel) ſince thou haſt not withheld "thy ſon, thine only ſon from me." This is a demonſtration that GOD loved us at a ſtupendous rate, when he would ſend his only-begotten SON into the world for us.

Before this, GOD had tried ſeveral ways with mankind, and employed ſeveral meſſengers to us; ſometimes he ſent his angels, and many times his ſervants the prophets; "but in theſe laſt days he hath ſent his "SON." He had many more ſervants to have employed upon this meſſage, but he had but one SON; and rather than mankind ſhould be ruined and loſt, he would ſend him. Such was the love of GOD towards us, that rather than our recovery ſhould not be effected, he would employ in this work the greateſt and deareſt perſon to him both in heaven and earth, his only-begotten SON; "in this was the love of

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" GOD manifeſted, that he ſent his only-begotten " SON, that we might live through him."

2. Let us conſider how much this glorious and excellent perſon was abaſed in order to the effecting and accompliſhing of this deſign, which is here expreſt, by ſending him into the world; and this comprehends his incarnation with all the mean and abaſing circumſtances of it. This the apoſtle declares fully to us, Phil. ii. 6, 7. " tho' he was in " the form of GOD, (that is, truly and really GOD) " yet he made himſelf of no reputation, ἑαυτὸν ἐκέ- " νωσε, he empty'd himſelf," was contented to be ſtrangely leſſen'd and diminiſh'd, " and took upon " him the form of a ſervant, or ſlave, and was " made in the likeneſs of men;" that is, did really aſſume humane nature. Here was an abaſement indeed, for GOD to become man, " for the only-be- " gotten SON of GOD to take upon him the form of " a ſervant, and to become obedient to death, even " the death of the croſs," which was the death of ſlaves, and infamous malefactors. Here was love indeed, that GOD was willing that his own dear SON ſhould be thus obſcured and diminiſhed, and become ſo mean and ſo miſerable for our ſakes; that he ſhould not only ſtoop " to be made man, and to dwell among " us," but that he ſhould likewiſe ſubmit " to the " infirmities of our nature, and to be made in all " things like unto us, ſin only excepted;" that he ſhould be contented to bear ſo many affronts and indignities from perverſe and unthankful men, " and to endure ſuch contradiction of ſinners againſt " himſelf; that he who was the brightneſs of his " FATHER's glory, ſhould be deſpiſed and rejected

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" of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with " griefs," and rather than we ſhould periſh, ſhould put himſelf into our place, and be contented to ſuffer and die for us; and that GOD ſhould be willing that all this ſhould be done to his only SON, to ſave ſinners, what greater teſtimony could he give of his love to us! SERM. LXXXV.

3. Let us conſider farther to whom he was ſent, which is alſo implied in theſe words, " he ſent his " SON into the world;" into a wicked world, that was altogether unworthy of him; and an ungrateful world, that did moſt unworthily uſe him.

Firſt, into a wicked world, that was altogether unworthy of him, that had deſerved no ſuch kindneſs at his hands. For what were we, that GOD ſhould ſend ſuch a perſon amongſt us, that he ſhould make his SON ſtoop ſo low as to dwell in our nature, and to become one of us? We were rebels and enemies, " enemies to GOD by evil works," up in arms againſt heaven, and at open defiance with GOD our maker. When the world was in this poſture of enmity and hoſtility againſt GOD; then he ſent his SON to treat with us, and to offer us peace. What can more commend the love of GOD than this, that he ſhould ſhew ſuch kindneſs to us, when we were ſinners and enemies! Herein " GOD hath commended his love " towards us; (ſays the apoſtle, Rom. v. 8.) in that " whilſt we were yet ſinners CHRIST died for us."

Seondly, Into an ungrateful world, that did moſt unworthily uſe him, that gave no becoming entertainment to him (" the foxes had holes, and the birds " of the air had neſts; but the SON of man had not " where to lay his head") that heaped all manner of con-

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contumelies and indignities upon him, that perſecuted him all his life, and at laſt put him to a moſt painful and ſhameful death; in a word, that was ſo far from receiving him as the SON of GOD, that they did not treat him with common humanity, and like one of the ſons of men.

4. He did all this voluntarily and freely; "GOD "ſent his SON into the world," *mero motu*, of his own mere grace and goodneſs, moved by nothing but his own bowels, and the conſideration of our miſery; not overpowered by any force; (for what could offer violence to him to whom all power belongs?) not conſtrained by any neceſſity, for he had been happy, tho' we had remained for ever miſerable; he might have choſen other objects of his love and pity, and have left us involved in that miſery which we had wilfully brought upon ourſelves.

Nor was he prevailed upon by any application from us, or importunity of ours to do this for us. Had we been left to have contrived the way of our recovery; this which GOD hath done for us, could never have entered into the heart of man to have imagin'd, much leſs to have deſir'd it at his hands. If the way of our ſalvation had been put into the hands of our own counſel and choice, how could we have been ſo impudent as to have begg'd of GOD, that his only SON might deſcend from heaven and become man, be poor, deſpiſed and miſerable for our ſakes? GOD may ſtoop as low as he pleaſeth, being ſecure of his own majeſty and greatneſs; but it had been a boldneſs in us, not far from blaſphemy, to have deſired of him to condeſcend to ſuch a ſubmiſſion.

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Nor, lastly, was he pre-oblig'd by any kindness or benefit from us; so far from that, that we had given him all possible provocation to the contrary, and had reason to expect the effect of his heaviest displeasure: and yet though he was the *pars læsa*, the party that had been disoblig'd and injur'd; though we were first in the offence and provocation, he was pleased to make the first overtures of peace and reconciliation; and tho' it was wholly our concernment, and not his; yet he was pleased to condescend so far to our perverseness and obstinacy, as "to send his SON to us, and to "beseech us to be reconciled." SERM. LXXXV.

Now herein (says the apostle, immediately after the text) "herein is love, not that we loved GOD, "but that he loved us, and sent his SON to be the "propitiation for our sins:" herein is the love of GOD manifested, that the kindness began on his part, and not on ours; that being neither obliged nor desired by us, he did freely and of his own accord, "send his only-begotten SON into the world, that "we might live through him."

What now remains but to apply this to ourselves?

1. Let us propound to ourselves the love of GOD for our pattern and example. This is the inference which the apostle makes in the next verse but one after the text, "Beloved, if GOD so loved us, we "ought also to love one another." One would have thought the inference should have been, "if GOD "so loved us, that we ought also to love him." But the apostle doth not speak so much of the affection, as the effect of love; and his meaning is, if GOD hath bestowed such benefits upon us, we ought, in imitation of him, to be kind and beneficial one

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to another. Not but that we ought "to love GOD "with all our hearts, and ſouls, and ſtrength;" but in this ſenſe we are not capable of it. We cannot be beneficial to him; becauſe he is ſelf-ſufficient, and ſtands in need of nothing; and therefore the apoſtle adds this as a reaſon, why he does not exhort men to love GOD, but one another; "no man hath ſeen "GOD at any time;" he is not ſenſible to us, and therefore none of theſe ſenſible things can ſignify any thing to him. But he hath friends and relations here in the world, who are capable of the ſenſible effects of our love, and to whom we may ſhew kindneſs for his ſake; we cannot be beneficial to GOD, but we may teſtify our love to him, by our kindneſs and charity to men who are made after the image of GOD; and if we ſee any one miſerable, that is conſideration enough to move our charity. There was nothing but this in us to move him to pity us, "when we "were in our blood, and no eye pitied us."

GOD is a pattern of the moſt generous kindneſs and charity. Tho' he be infinitely above us, yet he thought it not below him to conſider our caſe, and to employ his only SON to ſave us; he had no obligation to us, no expectation of advantage from us, and can never be in a poſſibility to ſtand in need of us; and yet he loved us, and hath conferred the greateſt benefits upon us: ſo that no man can have deſerved ſo ill at our hands, but that if he be in want, and we in a condition to help him, he ought to come within the compaſs and conſideration of our charity.

And this is the proper ſeaſon for it, when we commemorate the greateſt bleſſing and benefit that was

ever

ever conferr'd on mankind, " the SON of GOD ſent " into the world, on purpoſe to redeem and ſave us." And therefore I cannot but very much commend the cuſtom of feeding and relieving the poor, more eſpecially at this time, when the poor do uſually ſtand moſt in need of it, and when we commemorate " the grace " of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who being rich be- " came poor for our ſakes, that we through his po- " verty might be made rich." SERM. LXXXV.

2. Let us readily comply with the great deſign of this great love of GOD to mankind. " He hath ſent " his SON, that we might live through him." But tho' he had done all this for us, tho' he hath purchaſed ſo great bleſſings for us, as the pardon of our ſins, and power againſt them, and eternal life and happineſs; yet there is ſomething to be done on our parts, to make us partakers of theſe benefits. GOD hath not ſo loved us, as to ſend his SON into the world, to carry men to heaven whether they will or no; and to reſcue thoſe from the ſlavery of the devil, and the damnation of hell, who are fond of their fetters, and wilfully run themſelves upon ruin and deſtruction. But the SON of GOD came to offer happineſs to us, upon certain terms and conditions, ſuch as are fit for GOD to propound, and neceſſary for us to perform, to make us capable of the bleſſedneſs which he offers; as namely, " repentance towards " GOD, and faith in our LORD JESUS CHRIST;" a ſincere and conſtant endeavour of obedience to the laws and precepts of our holy religion.

Theſe are the terms of the goſpel; " and the grace " of GOD which brings ſalvation," offers it only upon theſe terms, " that we deny ungodlineſs and

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"worldly luſts, and live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly "in this preſent world :" then we may "expect the "bleſſed hope." But if we will not ſubmit to theſe conditions, the SON of GOD will be no SAVIOUR to us; "for he is the author of eternal ſalva- "tion only to them that obey him." If men will continue in their ſins, the redemption wrought by CHRIST will be of no advantage to them; ſuch as obſtinately perſiſt in an impenitent courſe, *Ipſa ſi velit ſalus ſervare non poteſt*, "ſalvation itſelf cannot "ſave them."

Theſe are the conditions of our happineſs, and if we ſubmit to them we are heirs of eternal life; if we refuſe, we are ſons of perdition, eternally loſt and undone; for we may aſſure ourſelves, that theſe are the beſt and eaſieſt terms that can ever be offered to us, becauſe GOD ſent them by his SON. This is the laſt effort of the divine love and goodneſs, towards the recovery and ſalvation of men; ſo the apoſtle tells us, Heb. i. 1, 2. "that GOD, who at ſundry times, "and in divers manners, ſpake to the fathers by the "prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken to us by "his SON;" and if we refuſe to hear him, he will ſpeak no more. After this it is not to be expected, that GOD ſhould make any farther attempts for our recovery; for he can ſend no greater nor dearer perſon to us, than his own SON; and if we refuſe him, whom will we reverence? if after this we ſtill wilfully go on in our Sins; "there remains no more ſacrifice "for ſin; but a fearful looking for of judgment, "and fiery indignation to conſume us."

3. With what joy and thankfulneſs ſhould we commemorate this great love of GOD to mankind, "in "ſending

" ſending his only-begotten SON into the world, that " we might live through him!" SERM. LXXXV.

This is the proper end of the bleſſed ſacrament, which we are now going to receive, to repreſent to our minds the incarnation and paſſion of our dear LORD, by the ſymbols of his body broken, and his blood ſhed for us. With what acknowledgments ſhould we celebrate the memory of this wonderful love, which the SON of GOD hath ſhewn to the ſons of men; endeavouring to make all the world in love with him, who hath ſo loved all mankind!

Whenever we ſee his blood poured forth, and his body broken for us, ſo moving a Sight ſhould raiſe ſtrange paſſions in us, of love to our SAVIOUR, and hatred to our ſins; and ſhould inſpire us with mighty reſolutions of ſervice and obedience to him; and whenever the pledges and ſeals of theſe benefits are delivered into our hands, the ſight of them ſhould at once wound and revive our hearts, and make us to cry out, " LORD, how unworthy am I, for whom thou " ſhouldſt do and ſuffer all this! I am overcome by " thy love, and can no longer hold out againſt the " mighty force of ſuch kindneſs! I render myſelf to " thee, and will ſerve thee for ever, who haſt re- " deemed me at ſo dear a rate!"

" Now to him that ſitteth upon the throne, and to " the lamb that was ſlain, to GOD even our FA- " THER, and to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the " firſt-begotten from the dead, and the prince of the " kings of the earth; unto him that hath loved us, " and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, and " hath made us kings and prieſts to GOD and his FA- " THER, to him be glory and dominion for ever and " ever. Amen."

SERMON LXXXVI.

The sin and danger of adding to the doctrine of the gospel.

GALAT. i. 8, 9.

But tho' we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

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BEFORE I come to handle the words, for the better understanding of them, I shall give a brief account of the occasion of them, which was this. Some false apostles had made a great disturbance in the churches planted by the apostles of CHRIST, by teaching that it was necessary for christians, not only to embrace and entertain the doctrines and precepts of the christian religion, but likewise to be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses. Of this disturbance which was raised in the christian church, you have the history at large, Acts xv. and as in several other churches, particularly in that of Galatia, these false apostles and seducers had perverted many, as appears by this epistle; in the beginning whereof St. Paul complains, that those who were so seduced into this error of the necessity of circumcision, and keeping the law of Moses, had by this new article of faith, which they had added to the

the christian religion, quite alter'd the frame of it, and made the gospel another thing from that which our SAVIOUR delivered, and commanded his apostles to teach all nations. SERM. LXXXVI

For he tells us, ver. 6. of this chapter, "that he "marvelled, that they were so soon removed from "him that called them by (or through) the grace of "CHRIST, unto another gospel," that is so different from that which they had been instructed in by those who first preached the gospel unto them: for the making of any thing necessary to Salvation, which our SAVIOUR in his gospel had not made so, he calls another gospel. "I marvel that ye are "so soon removed from him that called you by the "grace of CHRIST, unto another gospel, which is "not another, ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο, which is no other "thing, or by which I mean nothing else, but that "there are some that trouble you, and would per-"vert the gospel of CHRIST;" as if he had said, when I say that "ye are removed to another gos-"pel," I do not mean, that ye have renounced christianity, and are gone over to another religion, but that ye are seduced by those who have a mind to pervert the gospel of CHRIST, by adding something to it, as a necessary and essential part of it, which CHRIST hath not made so: this the apostle calls a perverting or overthrowing of the gospel; because, by thus altering the terms and conditions of it, they made it quite another thing from what our SAVIOUR delivered it.

And then at the 8th and 9th verses he denounceth a terrible anathema against those, whoever they shall be, yea tho' it were an apostle, or an angel from heaven,

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heaven, who by thus perverting the gospel of CHRIST (that is, by making any thing necessary to be believed or practised, which our SAVIOUR in his gospel hath not made so) should in effect "preach "another gospel; but tho' we, or an angel from "heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than "that which we have preached unto you, let him "be anathema, an accursed thing." And then to express his confidence and vehemency in this matter, and to shew that he did not speak this rashly, and in a heat, but upon due consideration, he repeats it again in the next verse, "as we said before, so say "I now again, if any man preach any other gospel "unto you, than that ye have received, let him be "accursed."

From the words thus explained by the consideration of the context, and of the main scope and design of this epistle, these following observations do naturally arise.

First, that the addition of any thing to the christian religion, as necessary to be believed and practised in order to salvation, is "a perverting of the "gospel of CHRIST, and preaching another gospel."

Secondly, that no pretence of infallibility is sufficient to authorise and warrant the addition of any thing to the christian doctrine, as necessary to be believed and practised in order to salvation.

Thirdly, that christians may judge and discern when such additions are made.

Fourthly, and consequently, that since the declaration of the gospel, and the confirmation of it, there is no authority in the christian church to impose upon christians any thing as of necessity to salvation, which the gospel hath not made so. Fifthly,

Fifthly, that there is no visible judge (how infallible soever he may pretend to be) to whose definitions and declarations in matters of faith and practice, necessary to salvation, we are bound to submit, without examination, whether these things be agreeable to the gospel of CHRIST, or not.

Sixthly, and lastly, whosoever teacheth any thing as of necessity to salvation, to be believed or practised, besides what the gospel of CHRIST hath made necessary, doth fall under the anathema here in the text, because in so doing, "he perverteth the gospel of CHRIST, and preacheth another gospel." Now the apostle expressly declares, "that tho' we "(that is, he himself, or any of the apostles) or an "angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto "you, than what we have preached unto you, let "him be accursed: as we said before, so say I now "again, if any man preach any other gospel unto "you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

I. That the addition of any thing to the christian religion, as necessary to be believed or practised, in order to salvation, "is a perverting of the gospel "of CHRIST, and preaching another gospel."

This is evident from the instances here given in this epistle; for the apostle chargeth the false apostles, with "perverting the gospel of CHRIST, and "preaching another gospel," upon no other account, but because they added to the christian religion, and made circumcision, and the keeping of the law of Moses, an essential part of the christian religion, and imposed upon christians the practice of these things, and the belief of the necessity of them, as a condition of eternal salvation. That

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That this was the doctrine of those false teachers, we find expressly, Acts xv. 1. "And certain men "which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, "and said, except ye be circumcised after the man- "ner of Moses, ye cannot be saved;" and ver. 24. in the letter written by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, to the churches abroad, there is this account given of it; "forasmuch as we have heard, that "certain which went out from us, have troubled you "with words, subverting your souls, saying, ye must "be circumcised, and keep the law, to whom we "gave no such commandment." Where you see that this doctrine is declared to be of pernicious consequence, tending to subvert the souls of men, and likewise to be an addition to the doctrine of the gospel which was delivered by the apostles, who here with one consent declare, "that they had given no "such commandment;" that is, had delivered no such doctrine as this, nor put any such yoke upon the necks of christians; but on the contrary had declared, that the death of CHRIST having put an end to the Jewish dispensation, there was now no obligation upon christians to observe the law of Moses.

And from the reason of the thing it is very plain, that the addition of any thing to the christian religion as necessary to be believed or practised in order to salvation, which the gospel hath not made so, is preaching another gospel; because it makes an essential change in the terms and conditions of the gospel-covenant, which declares salvation unto men upon such and such terms, and no other. Now to add any other terms to these, as of equal necessity with them, is to alter the condition of the covenant of the gospel,

pel, and the terms of the christian religion, and consequently "to preach another gospel," by declaring other terms of salvation, than CHRIST in his gospel hath declared, which is to pervert the gospel of CHRIST.

II. No pretence of infallibility is sufficient to authorise and warrant the addition of any thing to the christian doctrine, as necessary to be believed or practised, in order to salvation. After the delivery of the gospel by the SON of GOD, and the publication of it to the world by his apostles, who were commission'd and inspir'd by him to that purpose, and the confirmation of all, by the greatest and most unquestionable miracles that ever were, no person whatever that brought any other doctrine, and declared salvation to men on any other terms than those which are declared in the gospel, was to be credited, what pretence soever he should make to a divine commission or an infallible assistance. The apostle makes a supposition as high as can be, "tho' we (says he) or an "angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto "you, than that which we have preached unto you, "let him be an anathema." If the apostles themselves, who were divinely commissioned, and infallibly assisted in the preaching of the gospel, should afterwards make any addition to it, or declare any other terms of salvation than those which are declared in the gospel which they had already published to the world, they ought not to be regarded.

And the reason is plain; because what claim soever any person may make to infallibility, and what demonstration soever he may give of it, we cannot possibly believe him, if he contradict himself, and deliver doctrines which do plainly clash with one another: for if he spake true at first, I cannot believe

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him declaring the contrary afterwards: and if he did not speak true at first, I cannot believe him at all; because he can give no greater proof of his divine commission, and infallible assistance and inspiration, than he did at first.

And the reason is the same, if an angel from heaven should come and preach a contrary doctrine to that of the gospel, he were not to be believed neither; because he could bring no better credentials of his divine commission and authority, than those had who publish'd the gospel, and, consequently, he ought not to be credited in any thing contrary to what they had published before. For tho' a man were never so much disposed to receive a Revelation from GOD, and to submit his faith to it; yet it is not possible for any man to believe GOD against GOD himself; that is, to believe two revelations, plainly contradictory to one another, to be from GOD; and the reason of this is very obvious; because every man doth first, and more firmly, believe this proposition or principle, "that contradictions cannot be true," than any revelation whatsoever; for if contradictions may be true, then no revelation from GOD can signify any thing, because the contrary may be equally true, and so truth and falshood be all one.

The apostle indeed only makes a supposition, when he says, "tho' we, or an angel from heaven, preach any "other doctrine unto you;" but by this supposition he plainly bars any man, or company of men, from adding to the christian religion any article of faith, or point of practice, as of necessity to salvation, which the gospel hath not made so; I say, any man, or company of men, whatever authority or infallibility they may lay claim to, because they cannot pretend to a clearer com-

commission, and greater evidence of infallible assistance, than an apostle or an angel from heaven, and yet the text tells us, that would not be a sufficient warrant to preach another gospel; it might indeed bring in question that which they had preached before, but could not give credit and authority to any thing plainly contrary to it, and inconsistent with it.

III. Christians may judge and discern when another gospel is preached, when new articles of faith, or points of practice, not enjoined in the gospel, are imposed upon Christians. This the apostle supposeth every particular church, and for ought I know every particular christian, that is duly instructed in the christian religion to be a competent judge of, and to be sufficiently able to discern when another gospel is preached, and new terms and conditions, not declared in the gospel, are added to the christian religion; for if they be not able to judge of this, the apostle does in vain caution them against the seduction of those "who perverted the doctrine of CHRIST, and "endeavoured to remove them from him that had "called them by the grace of CHRIST, unto ano-"ther gospel."

It may perhaps be said, that there was no need that they should be able to discern and judge of the doctrines of those false teachers, it was sufficient for them to believe the apostle concerning the doctrines of those seducers, when he declared to them the falsehood and pernicious consequence of them. But the apostle speaks to them upon another supposition, which does necessarily imply, that they were able to discern and judge what doctrines were agreeable to the gospel, and what not; for he puts the case, that

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if he himself, or any of the apostles, or an angel from heaven, should preach to them another doctrine, contrary to that of the gospel, they ought to reject it with detestation; but this doth necessarily suppose them able to judge, when such doctrines were preached, and consequently that all things necessary to be believed and practised by all christians, are clearly and plainly declared in the gospel; all the doctrines whereof are now contained in the holy scriptures, in which all things necessary to faith and a good life, are so plainly delivered, that any sober and inquisitive person may learn them from thence, and the meanest capacity, by the help and direction of their guides and teachers, may be instructed in them.

And this is not only the principle of protestants, but the express and constant doctrine of the ancient fathers of the church, whatever the church of Rome, for the maintaining of her usurped authority over the consciences of men, pretends to the contrary. And if this were not so, that men are able to discern and judge which are the doctrines of the gospel, and what is contrary to them; the doctrine of the gospel was in vain preached, and the holy scriptures containing that doctrine were written to no purpose.

Some things in scripture are granted to be obscure and difficult, on purpose to exercise the study and enquiries of those who have leisure and capacity for it: but all things necessary are sufficiently plain; otherwise it would be impossible to judge when another gospel is preached, which the apostle here supposeth the Galatians capable of doing. For if the revelation of the gospel be not sufficiently plain in all things necessary to be believed and practised, then

christians

christians have no rule whereby to judge what doctrines are agreeable to the gospel, and what not, for an obscure rule is of no use; that is, in truth is no rule to those to whom it is obscure.

I proceed to the IVth observation, which is plainly consequent from those laid down before; namely, that since the declaration of the gospel, and the confirmation given to it, there is no authority in the christian church to impose upon christians any thing, as of necessity to salvation, which the gospel hath not made so.

The commission given by our LORD and SAVIOUR to his apostles, was "to preach the gospel to all nations, (or as St. Matthew expresses it) to go and "teach all nations, to observe all things whatsoever "he had commanded them;" and this is that which we call the gospel, viz. that doctrine which CHRIST commanded his apostles to preach and publish to the world; and if the apostles themselves had exceeded their commission, and added any other points of faith or practice to those which our SAVIOUR gave them in charge to teach and publish to the world, they had, in so doing, been guilty of that which St. Paul here in the text chargeth the false apostles with, viz. "of "preaching another gospel." And if the apostles had no authority to add any thing to the gospel, much less can any others pretend to it, since they have neither so immediate a commission, nor such a miraculous power to give testimony to them, "that they are teachers "come from GOD."

Now this doctrine of the gospel, which the apostles preached to the world, is that which christians are so often, and so earnestly by the apostles in all their epistles "exhorted to continue in, and not to suffer

"them-

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" themſelves to be ſhaken in mind, by every wind of " new doctrine," becauſe that which the apoſtles had delivered to them, was the intire doctrine of the goſpel, which was never to receive any addition or alteration. This is that which St. Peter calls " the holy " commandment which was delivered unto them," 2 Pet. ii. 21. " It had been better for them not to " have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after " they have known it, to turn from the holy com- " mandment delivered unto them," ſpeaking in all probability of thoſe who were ſeduced by the errors of the gnoſticks, from the purity of the chriſtian doctrine delivered to them by the apoſtles. This likewiſe St. Paul calls " the common faith," Titus i. 4. and St. Jude ver. 3. " the common ſalvation;" that is, the doctrine which contains the common terms of ſalvation, and " the faith which was once de- " livered to the ſaints," that is, by the apoſtles of our LORD, who publiſhed the goſpel; " once de- " livered," that is, once for all, ſo as never afterwards to admit of any change or alteration. This faith he exhorts chriſtians, " earneſtly to contend for," againſt thoſe ſeveral ſects of ſeducers, which were crept into the chriſtian church, and did endeavour by ſeveral arts to pervert the goſpel of CHRIST, and to deprave the faith delivered by the apoſtles.

So that the doctrine of the goſpel publiſh'd by the apoſtles, is fix'd and unalterable, and there can be no authority in the church to make any change in it, either by taking from it, or adding any thing to it, as neceſſary to be believed or practiſed in order to ſalvation.

5. It follows likewiſe from the foregoing obſervations, that there is no viſible judge (how much ſo-

ever

ever he may pretend to infallibility) to whose determination and decision in matters of faith and practice necessary to salvation, christians are bound to submit without examination, whether those things be agreeable to the doctrine of the gospel, or not.

When our SAVIOUR appeared in the world, tho' he had authority enough to exact belief from men, yet because there was a standing revelation of GOD made to the Jews, he appeals to that revelation, as well as to his own miracles, for the truth of what he said, and offered himself, and his doctrine, to be tried by the agreeableness of it to the scriptures of the old testament, and the predictions therein concerning him. And this was but reasonable, it being impossible for any man to receive two revelations, as from GOD, without liberty to examine whether they be agreeable to, and consistent with one another. In like manner the apostles of our LORD and SAVIOUR, tho' they were guided and assisted by an infallible spirit, and had an immediate commission from CHRIST to preach the doctrine of the gospel, did not require from men absolute submission to their doctrines and dictates, without examination of what they delivered, whether it were agreeable to the divine revelation which was contained in the ancient scriptures.

This was St. Paul's constant custom and way of teaching among the Jews, who had received the revelation of the old testament; he did not dictate to them by virtue of his infallibility, but "reasoned "with them out of the scriptures," and required their belief no farther than what he said should, upon examination, appear agreeable to the scriptures. So we find, Acts xvii. 2, 3. "And Paul, as his manner

"was,

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" was, went in unto them (speaking of the Jews) and " three sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the " scriptures, opening and alledging that CHRIST " must needs have suffered, and risen again from the " dead; and that this JESUS whom I preach unto you, " is the CHRIST." And chap. xviii. 28. " he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures, that JESUS was the CHRIST." And St. Paul was so far from reproving them for examining his doctrine by the scriptures, that he commended it, as an argument of a noble and generous mind in the Bereans, that they did not give full assent to his doctrine, till upon due search and examination they were satisfied that what he had said was agreeable to the scriptures. Chap. xvii. 11, 12. Where speaking of the Bereans, it is said, " That " these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, " in that they received the word, with all readiness " of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so; therefore many of them " believed;" that is, because upon search they found what he delivered to be agreeable to the scriptures; and it was not a slight, but diligent and deliberate search, they took time to examine things thoroughly; for it is said, " they searched the scriptures daily." And here in the text St. Paul puts the case, that if he, or any other of the apostles, concerning whose divine commission and assistance they were so fully satisfied, should deliver any thing to them contrary to the gospel which they had formerly preached, they were to reject it with the greatest abhorrence and detestation; and this necessarily supposeth a liberty to examine what was delivered, even by those whom they believed

to

to be infallibly assisted, and a capacity to discern and judge whether what they said was agreeable to the gospel at first delivered to them or not. SERM. LXXXVI.

And after this, shall any person or church (what claim soever they may make to infallibility) assume to themselves an authority to dictate in matters of faith, and that their dictates ought to be received with an absolute submission, and without liberty to examine whether they be agreeable to "the faith "once delivered to the saints;" and tho' they add new articles to the christian faith, and of which there is not the least footstep or intimation in any of the ancient creeds of the christian church, and do plainly impose upon christians the practice and belief of several things as necessary to salvation, which the gospel never declared to be so, yet no body shall judge of this, but every man ought without more ado, to believe blindfold, and to resign up his understanding and judgment to the directions of this visible infallible judge?

But surely this is not the reasonable "obedience "of faith," but the forc'd submission of slaves to the tyranny of their masters. Christians are expressly forbid "to call any man father or master upon "earth, because we have one father and master in "heaven." Now to make an absolute submission of our understandings to any upon earth, so as without examination to receive their dictates in matters of faith, is surely, if any thing can be so, "to call such "a person father or master," because a greater submission than this we cannot pay to our FATHER who is in heaven, even to GOD himself. I come now to the

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VI and last observation from the text, that whosoever teacheth any thing as of necessity to salvation, to be believed or practised, besides what the gospel of CHRIST hath made necessary, does fall under the anathema here in the text; because they that do so, do, according to the mind of St. Paul, "pervert the gospel of CHRIST, and preach ano-"ther gospel." For the reason why he chargeth the false apostles with "preaching another gospel," and those that were seduced by them, as "being re-"moved from him that called them into the grace of "CHRIST unto another gospel," is plainly this; that they had changed the terms of the christian religion, by adding new articles to it, which were not contained in the gospel; that is, by making it necessary to believe it to be so, because they taught so. Now St. Paul expressly declares this to be "preach-"ing another gospel," because they plainly alter'd the terms of salvation declared in the gospel, and made that to be necessary to the salvation of men, which the gospel had not made so.

And whatever person or church does the same, does incur the same guilt, and falls under the anathema and censure here in the text; yea, "tho' he "were an apostle, or an angel:" and I am sure no bishop or church in the world can pretend either to an equal authority or infallibility with an apostle, or an angel from heaven.

Let us then hear what St. Paul declares in this case, and consider seriously, with what earnestness and vehemency he declares it; "tho' we (says he) or "an angel from heaven preach any other gospel un-"to you, than that which we have preached unto "you,

" you, let him be accurſed. As we ſaid before, ſo ſay SERM. LXXXVI
" I now again, if any man preach any other goſpel
" unto you, than that ye have received, let him be
" accurſed." St. Paul you ſee is very earneſt in this matter, and very peremptory, and therefore I cannot but think this declaration of his to be more conſiderable, and every way more worthy of our regard and dread, than all the anathema's of the council of Trent, which in direct affront and contempt of this anathema of St. Paul, hath preſumed to add ſo many articles to the chriſtian religion, upon the counterfeit warrant of tradition, for which there is no ground or warrant from the ſcripture, or from any ancient creed of the chriſtian church.

And for the truth of this, I appeal to the creed of pope Pius the IVth, compiled out of the definitions of the council of Trent; by which council the pope only is authoriſed to interpret the true ſenſe and meaning of the canons and decrees of that council; and conſequently his interpretations muſt be of equal force and authority with that of the council it ſelf. So that whatſoever he hath put into his new creed for an article of faith, ought to be received with the ſame pious affection and veneration, as if the creed had been compiled by the council it ſelf; becauſe the pope, it ſeems, and no body elſe underſtands the true meaning of that council, at leaſt is thought fit to declare it. And therefore one may juſtly wonder at the preſumption of thoſe, who after this declaration of the council, have taken upon them to expound the catholick faith, and to repreſent that religion to us, as it is defined in that council; becauſe if there be any controverſy about the

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meaning of its definitions (as there have been a great many even betwixt thoſe who were preſent at the council when thoſe definitions were made) none but the pope himſelf can certainly tell the meaning of them.

Now in this creed of pope Pius, there are added to the ancient creed, of the chriſtian church, twelve or thirteen new articles, as concerning purgatory, tranſubſtantiation, the worſhip of images, the invocation of ſaints, the communion in one kind, and that the church of Rome is the mother and miſtreſs of all churches, and that there is no ſalvation to be had out of it; and ſeveral other points, all which have either no foundation in ſcripture, or are plainly contrary to it, and none of them ever eſteemed as articles of faith in the ancient chriſtian church for the firſt five hundred years; and yet they are now obtruded upon chriſtians, as of equal neceſſity to ſalvation, with the twelve articles of the apoſtles creed, and this under a pretence of infallibility, which St. Paul tells us would not have juſtified an apoſtle, or an angel from heaven, in making ſuch additions to the chriſtian religion, and the impoſing any thing as neceſſary to ſalvation, which is not ſo declared by the goſpel of CHRIST.

And all that they have to ſay for this, is, that we do not pretend to be infallible: but there is a neceſſity of an infallible judge to decide theſe controverſies, and to him they are to be referred. Which is juſt as if in a plain matter of right, a contentious and confident man ſhould deſire a reference, and contrive the matter ſo as to have it refer'd to himſelf, upon a ſleeveleſs pretence, without any proof or evidence,

dence, that he is the only person in the world that hath authority and infallible skill to decide all such differences. Thus the church of Rome would deal with us in things which are as plain as the noon-day; as whether GOD hath forbidden the worship of images in the second commandment? whether our SAVIOUR did institute the sacrament in both kinds? whether the people ought not to read the scriptures, and to have the publick service of GOD in a known tongue? these, and the like, they would have us refer to an infallible judge; and when we ask who he is, they tell us that their church, which hath imposed these things upon christians, and made these additions to the gospel of CHRIST, is that infallible judge. But if she were as infallible as she pretends to be, even as an apostle, or an angel from heaven, St. Paul hath denounced an anathema against her, for preaching another gospel, and making those things necessary to the salvation of men, which are not contained in the gospel of CHRIST.

The inference from all this discourse in short, is this; "that we should contend earnestly for the "faith once delivered to the saints," and not suffer our selves by the confident pretences of seducers, "to be removed from him that hath called us "through the grace of CHRIST unto another gos-"pel." The necessary doctrines of the christian religion, and the common terms of salvation are so plain, that if any man be ignorant of them, it is his own fault; and if any go about to impose upon us any thing as of necessity to be believed and practised in order to salvation, which is not declared to be so in the holy scriptures, which contain the true

doctrine

doctrine of the gospel, what authority soever they pretend for it, yea, tho' they assume to themselves to be infallible; the apostle hath plainly told us what we are to think of them; for he hath put the case as high as possible here in the text, when he says, "tho' we, "or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel "unto you, than that which we have preached unto "you, let him be accursed."

I will conclude all with that counsel which the SPIRIT of GOD gives to the churches of Asia, Rev. iii. 3. "Remember therefore how thou hast received "and heard, and hold fast;" and chap. ii. 10. "Fear "none of those things which thou shalt suffer, be "thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a "crown of Life."

SERMON LXXXVII.

Honesty the best preservative against dangerous mistakes in religion.

JOHN vii. 17.

If any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of GOD, *or whether I speak of myself.*

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SINCE there are so many different opinions and apprehensions in the world about matters of religion, and every sect and party does with so much confidence pretend that they, and they only, are

are in the truth ; the great difficulty and queſtion is, by what means men may be ſecured from dangerous errors and miſtakes in religion. For this end ſome have thought it neceſſary that there ſhould be an infallible church, in the communion whereof every man may be ſecured from the dangers of a wrong belief. But it ſeems GOD hath not thought this neceſſary : if he had, he would have revealed this very thing more plainly than any particular point of faith whatſoever. He would have told us expreſly, and in the plaineſt terms, that he had appointed an infallible guide and judge in matters of faith, and would likewiſe have told us as plainly who he was, and where we might find him, and have recourſe to him upon all occaſions ; becauſe the ſincerity of our faith depending upon him, we could not be ſafe from miſtake in particular points, without ſo plain and clear a revelation of this infallible judge, that there could be no miſtake about him ; nor could there be an end of any other controverſies in religion, unleſs this infallible judge (both that there is one, and who he is) were out of controverſy. But neither of theſe are ſo: it is not plain from ſcripture that there is an infallible judge and guide in matters of faith ; much leſs is it plain who he is ; and therefore we may certainly conclude, that GOD hath not thought it neceſſary that there ſhould be an infallible guide and judge in matters of faith, becauſe he hath revealed no ſuch thing to us: and that biſhop and that church who only have arrogated infallibility to themſelves, have given the greateſt evidence in the world to the contrary ; and have been detected and ſtand convinced of the greateſt errors: and it is in vain for any man or company of men, to pretend

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to infallibility, ſo long as the evidence that they are deceived is much greater and clearer than any proof they can produce for their infallibility.

If then GOD hath not provided an infallible guide and judge in matters of faith; there is ſome other way whereby men may be ſecured againſt dangerous and damnable errors in religion, and whereby they may diſcern truth from impoſture, and what doctrines are from GOD, and what not; and this our SAVIOUR declares to us here in the text, namely, that an honeſt and ſincere mind, and a hearty deſire to do the will of GOD, is the beſt preſervative againſt fatal errors and miſtakes in matters of religion; ἐάν τις θέλῃ ποιεῖν· "If any man deſire to do his will, he ſhall know "of the doctrine, whether it be of GOD, or whether "I ſpeak of myſelf."

There are two dangerous miſtakes in religion: to reject any thing which really comes from God; and to receive and entertain any thing as from God, which doth not really come from him.

Firſt, to reject any thing which really comes from GOD. This miſtake the Jews frequently fell into, when they rejected the true prophets which GOD from time to time ſent to them, ſlighting their meſſage, and perſecuting their perſons: but they miſcarried moſt fatally and remarkably in their contempt of the true MESSIAS, that great prophet whom they had ſo long expected, and whom GOD ſent at laſt, to bring ſalvation to them; but when he came, they knew him not, nor would receive him, but uſed him with all the deſpite and contempt imaginable, not as "a "teacher come from GOD," but as a deceiver, and impoſtor.

Now

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Now the danger of rejecting any thing that comes from GOD, conſiſts in this, that it cannot be done without the higheſt affront to the divine majeſty. To reject a divine meſſage, or revelation is to oppoſe GOD, and fight againſt him. So our SAVIOUR tells the Jews, "that in deſpiſing him, they deſpiſed him "that ſent him."

Secondly, there is alſo another dangerous miſtake on the other hand, in entertaining any thing as a revelation from GOD, which is not really from him. And this likewiſe the Jews were frequently guilty of, in receiving the falſe prophets which ſpake in the name of the LORD, when he had not ſent them. And this is commonly the temper of thoſe who reject the truth, greedily to ſwallow error and deluſion. So our SAVIOUR tells us of the Jews, John v. 43. "I am come in my FATHER'S name, and ye "receive me not; if another ſhall come in his own "name, him ye will receive?" This prediction of our SAVIOUR'S concerning the Jews, was fully accompliſh'd; for after they had rejected him, who gave ſuch abundant evidence that he was the true MESSIAS, and "a teacher ſent from GOD," they received others, who really came in their own names, and ran after thoſe who pretended to be the MESSIAS, and were in great numbers deſtroyed with them. And this is very juſt with GOD, that "thoſe who receive not the truth in the love "of it, ſhould be given to ſtrong deluſions, to be-"lieve lies."

Now theſe being the two great dangerous miſtakes in religion which men are liable to, my work at this time ſhall be to ſhew, how a ſincere deſire

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and endeavour to do the will of GOD, is a security to men against both those dangers; and it will appear to be so, upon these two accounts.

1. Because he who sincerely desires and endeavours to do the will of GOD, is hereby better qualified and disposed to make a right judgment of spiritual and divine things.

II. Because GOD's providence is more especially concerned to secure such persons from dangerous errors and mistakes in things which concern their eternal salvation. These shall be the two heads of my following discourse.

First, because he who sincerely desires and endeavours to do the will of GOD, is hereby better qualified and disposed to make a right judgment of spiritual and divine things, and that for these two reasons,

1. Because such a person hath a truer notion of GOD, and divine things.

2. Because he is more impartial in his search and enquiry after truth.

1. Because such a person hath a truer notion of GOD and divine things. No man is so likely to have clear and true apprehensions of GOD, as a good man, because he hath transcribed the divine perfections in his own mind, and is himself in some measure and degree what GOD is. And for this reason it is, that the scripture so often lays the foundation of all divine knowledge in the practice of religion. Job xxviii. 28. "The fear of the LORD, that is wisdom, and "to depart from evil, is understanding;" and Psal. cxi. 10. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of "wisdom," that is, the principal and foundation of it; "a good understanding have all they that do his "command-

" commandments." Whereas the vices and luſts of men darken their reaſon, and diſtort their underſtandings, and fill the mind with groſs and ſenſual apprehenſions of things, and thereby render men unfit to diſcern thoſe truths which are of a ſpiritual nature and tendency, and altogether indiſpoſed to receive them. For tho' the vices of men be properly ſeated in their wills, and do not poſſeſs their underſtandings; yet they have a bad influence upon them, as fumes and vapours from the ſtomach are wont to affect the head.

Nothing indeed is more natural to the mind and underſtanding of men, than the knowledge of GOD; but we may abuſe our faculties, and render them unfit for the diſcerning even of their proper objects.

When men by wicked practices, have rendred themſelves unlike to GOD, they will not love to " re-" tain the knowledge of him " in their minds, but will " become vain in their imaginations" concerning him. What clouds and miſts are to the bodily eye, that the luſts and corruptions of men are to the underſtanding; they hinder it from a clear perception of heavenly things; the pure in heart, they are beſt qualified for the ſight of GOD.

Now according as a man's notions of GOD are, ſuch will be his apprehenſions of religion. All religion is either natural, or revealed: natural religion conſiſts in the belief of a GOD, and in right conceptions and apprehenſions concerning him, and in a due reverence and obſervance of him, and in a ready and chearful obedience to thoſe laws which he hath imprinted upon our nature; and the ſum of our obedience conſiſts in our conformity to GOD, and an

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endeavour to be like him. For supposing God to have made no external revelation of his mind to us, we have no other way to know his will, but by considering his own nature, and our own; and if so, then he that resembles God most, is like to understand him best, because he finds those perfections in some measure in himself, which he contemplates in the divine nature; and nothing gives a man so sure a notion of things, as practice and experience: every good man is in some degree "partaker of a divine "nature," and feels that in himself, which he conceives to be in God: so that this man does experience what others do but talk of; he sees the image of God in himself, and is able to discourse of him from an inward sense and feeling of his excellency and perfections.

And as for revealed religion, the only design of that is, to revive and improve the natural notions which we have of God, and all our reasonings about divine revelation, are necessarily gathered by our natural notions of religion; and therefore he that sincerely endeavours "to do the will of God," is not apt to be imposed upon by the vain and confident pretences of divine revelation; but if any doctrine be proposed to him, which pretends to come from God, he measures it by those steady and sure notions which he hath of the divine nature and perfections, and by those he will easily discern whether it be worthy of God, or not, and likely to proceed from him: he will consider the nature and tendency of it, and whether it be (as the apostle expresses it) "a doc-"trine according to godliness," such as is agreeable to the divine nature and perfections, and tends to make

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us like to GOD; if it be not, tho' an angel from heaven ſhould bring it, he will not receive it: if it be, he will not reject it upon every idle pretence, and frivolous exception that prejudiced and ill-minded men may make againſt it; but after he is ſatisfied of the reaſonableneſs and purity of the doctrine, he will accept of ſuch evidence and confirmation of it, as is fit for GOD to give to his own revelations; and if the perſon that brings it, hath an atteſtation of miracles (which is neceſſary in caſe it be a new doctrine) and if he carry on no earthly intereſt and deſign by it, but does by his life and actions make it evident that he aims at the glory of GOD, and the good of men; in this caſe a good man, whoſe mind is free from paſſion and prejudice, will eaſily aſſent, that this man's "doctrine is of GOD, and that "he does not ſpeak of himſelf." This was the evidence which our SAVIOUR offered to the Jews in vindication of himſelf, and his doctrine, John vii. 18. "He that ſpeaketh of himſelf, ſeeketh his own glory: "but he that ſeeketh his glory that ſent him, the "ſame is true, and no unrighteouſneſs in him;" as if he had ſaid, hereby may you diſtinguiſh one that really comes from GOD, from an impoſtor: if any man ſeek his own glory, you may conclude that GOD hath not ſent him, but whatever he pretends, that he ſpeaks of himſelf; but he who by his life, and the courſe of his actions, demonſtrates that he ſeeks the honour of GOD, and not any intereſt and advantage of his own, "the ſame is true, and there "is no unrighteouſneſs in him;" that is, no falſhood or deſign to deceive (for ſo the word ἀδικία does ſometimes ſignify;) you may conclude ſuch an

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one to be no deceiver, or impostor. And if any man sincerely desires and endeavours to do the will of GOD, he may, by such marks and characters as these, judge of any doctrine that pretends to be from GOD, whether it be so or not. This is the first reason; because he that sincerely desires and endeavours to do the will of GOD, hath the truest notion of GOD, and of divine things.

2. Such a person is more impartial in his search and enquiry after truth, and therefore more likely to find it, and to discern it from error. He that hath an honest mind, and sincerely endeavours to do the will of GOD, is not apt to be swayed and biassed by any interest or lust; for his greatest interest is to please GOD, and he makes all his other interests and concernments to stoop and yield to that. But if a man be governed by any earthly interest or design, he will measure all things by that, and is not at liberty to entertain any thing that crosses it, and to judge equally of any doctrine that is opposite to his interest. This our SAVIOUR gives for a reason, why the great rabbies and teachers among the Jews did not believe and embrace his doctrine, John v. 44. "How can ye believe, which receive honour one "of another?" if men have any other design in religion than to please GOD, and to advance his honour and glory in the world, no wonder if they be apt to reject the most divine truths; because these are calculated, not to approve us to men, but to GOD.

And as vain-glory, and desire of the applause of men; so likewise doth every other lust make a man partial in his judgment of things, and clap a false bias upon his understanding, which carries it off from truth,

truth, and makes it to lean towards that ſide of the queſtion which is moſt favourable to the intereſt of his luſts. A vicious man is not willing to entertain thoſe truths which would croſs and check him in his courſe: he hath made the truth his enemy, and therefore he thinks himſelf concerned to oppoſe it, and riſe up againſt it: the light of it offends him, and therefore he ſhuts his eyes that he may not ſee it. Thoſe holy and pure doctrines which are from GOD, reprove the luſts of men, and diſcover the deformity of them; and therefore no wonder if bad men be ſo hard to be reconciled to them. This account our SAVIOUR likewiſe gives of the fierce enmity of the Jews to him, and his doctrine, John iii. 19, 20. "Light is come into the World, and men loved "darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were "evil; for every one that hath done evil hateth the "light, neither cometh to the light, leſt his deeds "ſhould be reproved." SERM. LXXXVII.

The vicious inclinations of men are a dead weight upon their underſtandings, and able to draw down the ſcales againſt the cleareſt truths: for tho' it be abſolutely in no man's power to believe or to disbelieve what he will; yet mens lives have many times a great influence upon their underſtandings, to make aſſent eaſy, or difficult; and as we are forward to believe what we have a mind to, ſo are we very backward and ſlow in yielding our aſſent to any thing that croſſeth our inclinations. Men that allow themſelves in ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, will not eaſily believe thoſe doctrines which charge men ſo ſtrictly with all manner of holineſs and purity.

This is the way which the devil hath always uſed

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to "blind the eyes of men, that the light of the glo-"rious gospel of CHRIST might not shine into "them." And certainly the most effectual way to keep men in infidelity, is to debauch them in their lives; therefore the apostle gives this as the reason of the infidelity of men in the last times, 2 Thes. ii. 12. "They believed not the truth, but had pleasure in "unrighteousness." When men once abandon themselves to lewd and vicious practices, infidelity becomes their interest, because they have no other way to defend and excuse a wicked life, but by denying the truth which oppoſeth it, and finds fault with it.

That man only stands fair for the entertainment of truth, who is under the dominion of no vice, or lust; because he hath nothing to corrupt or bribe him, to seduce him, or draw him aside in his enquiry after truth; he hath no interest but to find the truth, and follow it: he is enquiring after the way to heaven, and eternal happiness, and he hath the indifferency of a traveller which is not inclined to go this way rather than another; for his concernment is to find out the right way, and to walk in it: such an indifferency of mind hath every good man, who sincerely desires to do the will of GOD; he stands ready to receive truth, when sufficient evidence is offered to convince him of it; because he hath no manner of concernment that the contrary proposition should be true. As in mathematicks, a man is ready to give his assent to any proposition, that is sufficiently demonstrated to him, because he hath no inclination or affection to one side of the question more than to the other; all his design and concernment is to find out the truth on which side soever it lies; and he is like to find it, because he

he is ſo indifferent, and impartial. But if a man be biaſs'd by any luſt, and addicted to any vicious practice, he is then an intereſted perſon, and concerned to be partial in his judgment of things, and is under a great temptation to infidelity, when the truths of GOD are propoſed to him; becauſe whatever the evidence for them be, he cannot but be unwilling to own the truth of that doctrine, which is ſo contrary to his inclination and intereſt. If the affections and intereſts of men were as deeply concerned, and as ſenſibly touched in the truth of mathematical propoſitions, as they are in the principles of morality and religion, we ſhould find that when a propoſition ſtood in their way, and lay croſs to their intereſt, though it were never ſo clearly demonſtrated, yet they would raiſe a duſt about it, and make a thouſand cavils, and fence even againſt the evidence of a demonſtration; they would palliate their error with all the skill and art they could, and tho' the abſurdity of it was never ſo great and palpable, yet they would hold it faſt againſt all ſenſe and reaſon, and face down mankind in the obſtinate defence of it; for we have no reaſon to doubt, but that they who in matters of religion will believe directly contrary to what they ſee, would, if they had the ſame intereſt and paſſions to ſway them in the caſe, believe contrary to the cleareſt mathematical demonſtration; for where there is an obſtinate reſolution not to be convinc'd, all the reaſon and evidence in the world ſignifies nothing. SERM. LXXXVII.

Whereas he that is biaſſed by no paſſion or intereſt, but hath an honeſt mind, and is ſincerely deſirous to do the will of GOD ſo far as he knows it, is likely to judge very impartially concerning any doctrines that

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are proposed to him: for if there be not good evidence that they are from GOD, he hath no reason to deceive himself, in giving credit to them; and if there be good evidence that they are divine, he hath no interest or inclination to reject them; for it being his great design to do the will of GOD, he is glad of all opportunities to come to the knowledge of it, that he may do it.

Thus you see, how a sincere desire and endeavour to obey the will of GOD, does secure men against fatal errors and mistakes in matters of religion; because such persons are hereby better disposed to make a right judgment of divine things, both because they have truer and surer notions of GOD and religion, and are more impartial in their search and enquiry after truth. This is the first account.

II. Another reason why they who sincerely desire to do the will of GOD, have a great security in discerning truth from error, is, because the providence of GOD is more especially concerned to preserve such persons from dangerous errors and mistakes, in things which concern their eternal salvation. When men are of a teachable temper, GOD loves to reveal himself and his truth to them; and such is an humble and obedient frame of mind, Psal. xxv. 9. "The meek "will he guide in judgment; the meek will he teach "his way." The proper disposition of a scholar, is to be willing to learn; and that which in religion we are to learn; is "what is the good and ac-"ceptable will of GOD," that we may do it, for practice is the end of knowledge. "If you know "these things (says our blessed LORD) happy are "ye if ye do them." It is necessary to know the will of GOD; because we are happy only in the doing of it:

it: and if any man be deſirous to do the will of God, his goodneſs is ſuch, that he will take effectual care to ſecure ſuch an one againſt dangerous and fatal errors. He that hath an honeſt mind, and would do the will of GOD, if he knew it, GOD will not ſuffer him to remain ignorant of it, or to be miſtaken about it, in any neceſſary points of faith and practice.

St. Paul is a wonderful inſtance of the goodneſs of GOD in this kind. He was undoubtedly a man of a very honeſt mind; he had entertained the jewiſh religion, as revealed by GOD, and been bred in it; and out of a blind reverence and belief of his teachers, who rejected CHRIST and his doctrine, he likewiſe oppoſed and perſecuted them with a mighty zeal, and an honeſt intention, being "verily perſuaded (as he "himſelf tells us) that he ought to do what he did, "againſt the name of JESUS of Nazareth;" he was under a great prejudice upon account of his education, and according to the heat of his natural temper, tranſported with great paſſion: but becauſe he did what he did, ignorantly, and in unbelief; GOD was pleaſed to ſhew mercy to him, and, in a miraculous manner, to convince him of the truth of that religion which he perſecuted. He was ſincerely deſirous to do the will of GOD, and therefore GOD would rather work a miracle for his converſion, than ſuffer him to go on in ſo fatal a miſtake concerning the chriſtian religion.

And as the providence of GOD doth concern itſelf to ſecure good men from dangerous errors and miſtakes in matter of religion; ſo by a juſt judgment he gives up thoſe who allow themſelves in vicious practices, to error and infidelity. And this is the mean-

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ing of that passage of the prophet, Isa. vi. 10. so often cited by our SAVIOUR, and applied to the Jews, "of making the heart of that people fat, and their "ears heavy, and closing their eyes, lest they should "understand, and be converted." So again, Isa. lxvi. 3, 4. GOD threatens the people of Israel, that because they were wicked and abominable in their lives, he would abandon them, and give them over to a spirit of delusion; "they have chosen their own "ways, and their soul delighteth in their abomina-"tions; I also will choose their delusions." GOD is said to choose those things for us, which he permits us to fall into: so Rom. i. 28. GOD is said to give over the abominable heathen to a reprobate mind. "As they did not like to retain GOD in their know-"ledge, GOD gave them over εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν, to "an injudicious and undiscerning mind." When men abandon themselves to wickedness and impiety, GOD withdraws his grace from them; and by his secret and just judgment they are deprived of the faculty of discerning between truth and error, between good and evil, 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12. It is said, "that "the man of sin should come with all deceivableness "of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they "received not the love of the truth, that they might "be saved." And that "for this cause, GOD would "send them strong delusion, that they should believe "a lye; that they might all be damned, who believed "not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." And it is just with GOD, that men of vicious inclinations and practices should be exposed to the cheat of the grossest and vilest impostors. GOD's providence is concerned for men of honest minds, and sincere in-

intentions: but if men "take pleaſure in unrighteouſ-"neſs," GOD takes no further care of them, but "delivers them up to their own hearts luſts," to be ſeduced into all thoſe errors, into which their own vain imaginations, and their fooliſh hearts are apt to lead them.

Thus have I endeavoured, as briefly as I could, to ſhew that an honeſt mind, "that ſincerely deſires "and endeavours to do the will of GOD," is the beſt ſecurity againſt fatal errors and miſtakes in matters of religion; both becauſe it diſpoſeth a man to make a true judgment of divine things, and becauſe the providence of GOD is more eſpecially concerned for the ſecurity of ſuch perſons.

There remains an objection to be anſwered, to which this diſcourſe may ſeem liable; but this, together with the inferences which may be made from this diſcourſe, I ſhall refer to another opportunity.

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Honeſty the beſt preſervative againſt dangerous miſtakes in religion.

JOHN vii. 17.

If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of GOD, *or whether I ſpeak of myſelf.*

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The ſecond Sermon on this Text.

I Made entrance into theſe words the laſt day; in which our SAVIOUR declares to us, that an honeſt and ſincere mind, and an hearty deſire and endeavour to do the will of GOD, is the beſt ſecurity and

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and preservative against dangerous errors and mistakes in matters of religion; ἐάν τις θέλῃ ποιεῖν, "if any "man desire to do his will, he shall know of the doc- "trine, whether it be of GOD, or whether I speak "of my self."

Now there are (I told you) two great mistakes in religion: "to reject any thing which really is from "GOD; and to receive, and entertain any thing as "from GOD, which is not really from him." And therefore I proposed from this text to shew how a sincere desire and endeavour to do the will of GOD, is a security to men against both these Dangers, namely upon these two accounts.

First, Because he who sincerely desires and endeavours to do the will of GOD, is hereby better qualified and disposed to make a right judgment of spiritual and divine things; and that for these two reasons.

I. Because such a person hath a truer notion of GOD, and divine things. He that resembleth GOD most, is like to understand him best, because he finds those perfections, in some measure, in himself, which he contemplates in the divine nature; and nothing gives a man so sure a notion of things, as practice and experience.

II. Because such a person is more impartial in his search and enquiry after truth, and therefore more likely to find it, and to discern it from error. That man only stands fair for the entertainment of truth, who is under the power and dominion of no vice or lust, because he hath nothing to corrupt or bribe him, to seduce and draw him aside in his enquiry after truth: he hath no manner of concernment that the contrary proposition should be true, having the indifferency of a traveller,

traveller, and no other intereſt, but to find out the right way to heaven, and to walk in it. But if a man be biaſſed by any luſt, and addicted to any vicious practice, he is then an intereſted perſon, and concern'd to make a partial judgment of things, and is under a great temptation to infidelity, when the truths of GOD are propoſed to him; becauſe, whatever the evidence for them be, he cannot but be unwilling to own the truths of thoſe doctrines, which are ſo contrary to his inclination and intereſt.

Secondly, Another reaſon why they who ſincerely deſire to do the will of GOD, have a greater ſecurity in diſcerning truth from error, is, becauſe the providence of GOD is more eſpecially concern'd to preſerve ſuch perſons from dangerous errors and miſtakes, in things which concern their eternal ſalvation. When men are of a teachable temper, of an humble and obedient frame of mind, GOD loves to reveal himſelf, and his truth to them, Pſal. xxv. 9. "The meek "will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he "teach his way." The proper diſpoſition of a ſcholar, is to be willing to learn; and that which in religion we are to learn, is, "what is the good and ac- "ceptable will of GOD, that we may do it;" for practice is the end of knowledge; "if ye know "theſe things (ſaith our SAVIOUR) happy are ye if "ye do them." It is neceſſary to know the will of GOD; but we are only happy in the doing of it; and if any man be deſirous to do the will of GOD, his goodneſs is ſuch, that he will take effectual care to ſecure ſuch a one againſt dangerous and fatal errors. He that hath an honeſt mind, and will do the will of GOD, if he knew it, GOD will not ſuffer him to remain ignorant

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ignorant of it, or to be mistaken about it in any necessary point of faith, or practice. Thus far I have gone.

I shall now proceed to remove an objection, to which this discourse may seem liable, and then draw some inferences from the whole.

After all that hath been said, some perhaps may ask, Is every good man then secure from all error and mistake in matters of religion? This is a mighty privilege indeed: but do not we find the contrary in experience? That an honest heart, and a weak head, do often meet together.

For answer to this, I shall lay down these following propositions.

First, That if there were any necessity, that a good man should be secured from all manner of error and mistake in religion, this probity of mind, and sincere desire to do the will of GOD, is the best way to do it; because such a temper and disposition of mind gives a man the best advantages to discern betwixt truth and error; and GOD is most likely to reveal his will to such persons. But there is no necessity of this, because a man may be a good man, and go to heaven, notwithstanding a great many mistakes in religion about things not necessary. For while we are in this imperfect state, "we know but in part," and see many things very imperfectly: but when we shall come into a more perfect State, "that which is imperfect shall be done "away;" the light of glory shall scatter all those mists and clouds, which are now upon our understandings, and hinder us from a clear sight and judgment of things; we shall then see GOD, and other things, as they are; and be freed from all that ignorance, and those many childish mistakes which we are liable to here

here below; and till then, it is not neceſſary that we ſhould be ſecured from them. Humility, under a ſenſe of our ignorance, is better for us, than infallibility would be. SERM. LXXXVIII.

Secondly, this temper and diſpoſition of mind, which I have been ſpeaking of, is a certain ſecurity againſt fatal miſtakes in religion, and a final continuance in ſuch errors, as would prove damnable; and this is all that this diſcourſe pretends to, or our SAVIOUR hath promiſed in this text. And conſidering the goodneſs of GOD, nothing is more improbable, than that an honeſt mind that ſeeks impartially after truth, ſhould miſs of it, in things that are fundamentally neceſſary to ſalvation. And if we could ſuppoſe ſuch a man to fall into ſuch an error, either it would not be fundamental to him, having not been, perhaps, propoſed to him with ſufficient evidence, and would be forgiven him upon a general repentance for all ſins and errors known, or unknown; or he would not be permitted to continue in it; but the providence of GOD would find out ſome way or other to convince him of his error, and to bring him "to the acknowledgement "of the truth, that he might be ſaved." GOD would rather ſpeak to him immediately from heaven (as he did to St. Paul) than ſuffer him to continue in ſuch an error, as would infallibly carry him to hell.

Thirdly, there is no ſuch depth of judgment, and ſubtilty of wit required, to diſcern between groſs and damnable errors in religion, and neceſſary and ſaving truth, but that an ordinary capacity may be able to do it. There is ſo plain a line drawn between great truth, and groſs errors, that it is viſible to every capacity; and an ordinary underſtanding, that is not

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under a violent prejudice, or blinded by ſome vice or fault of the will, may eaſily diſcern it. Indeed, in matters of leſſer moment and concernment, and which have no ſuch conſiderable and immediate influence upon the practice of an holy life, the difference betwixt truth and error is not always ſo groſs and ſenſible, as to be obvious to every unprejudiced eye. But we have all the reaſon in the world to believe, that the goodneſs and juſtice of GOD is ſuch, as to make nothing neceſſary to be believed by any man, which, by the help of due inſtruction, may not be made ſufficiently plain to a common underſtanding. GOD hath ſo tender a care of good men, who ſincerely love him and his truth, that we may reaſonably preſume, that he will not leave them under an unavoidable miſtake, concerning thoſe matters upon which their eternal ſalvation does depend. "The judge of all the "world will do right;" and then we may certainly conclude, that he will not condemn any man for no fault, and make him for ever miſerable, for falling into an error, which, with all his care and diligence, he could not poſſibly either diſcern or avoid.

Fourthly, GOD hath made abundant proviſion for our ſecurity from fatal and dangerous errors in religion, by theſe three ways.

I. By an infallible rule, ſufficiently plain in all things neceſſary.

II. By ſufficient means of inſtruction, to help us to underſtand this rule.

III. By an infallible promiſe of ſecurity from dangerous errors and miſtakes, if with an honeſt mind and due diligence we apply our ſelves to underſtand this rule, and make uſe of the means of inſtruction,

ſtruction, which GOD hath provided for that purpoſe. SERM. LXXXVIII.

I. GOD hath given us an infallible rule, ſufficiently plain in all things neceſſary. He hath given us the holy ſcriptures, which were given at firſt by divine inſpiration, i. e. by men infallibly aſſiſted in the writing of them, and therefore muſt needs be an infallible rule; and "all ſcripture divinely inſpired, is profitable "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for in-"ſtruction in righteouſneſs," as St. Paul tells us, 2 Tim. iii. 16. ſpeaking there of the books of the old teſtament; and there is the ſame reaſon as to the inſpired writings of the new.

Now if the ſcriptures be an infallible rule, and "profitable for doctrine and inſtruction in righte-"ouſneſs," i. e. to teach us to believe, and do; it follows of neceſſity, that they are ſufficiently plain in all things neceſſary to faith, and a good life; otherwiſe they could not be "uſeful for doctrine and in-"ſtruction in righteouſneſs;" for a rule that is not plain to us in theſe things, in which it is neceſſary for us to be directed by it, is of no uſe to us; that is in truth, it is no rule. For a rule muſt have theſe two properties; it muſt be perfect, and it muſt be plain. The ſcriptures are a perfect rule, becauſe the writers of them being divinely inſpired, were infallible: and they muſt likewiſe be plain; otherwiſe, tho' they be never ſo perfect, they can be of no more uſe to direct our faith and practice, than a ſun-dial in a dark room is, to tell us the hour of the day: for tho' it be never ſo exactly made, unleſs the ſun ſhine clearly upon it, we had as good be without it. A rule that is not plain to us, whatever it may be in it ſelf, is of no

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use at all to us, 'till it be made plain, and we understand it.

II. God hath likewise provided sufficient means of instruction to help us to understand this rule. It is not necessary that a rule should be so plain, that we should perfectly understand it at first sight; it is sufficient, if it be so plain, that those of better capacity and understanding may, with due diligence and application of mind, come to the true knowledge of it; and those of a lower and more ordinary capacity by the help and instruction of a teacher. Euclid's elements is a book sufficiently plain to teach a man geometry; but yet not so plain that any man at first reading should understand it perfectly; but that by diligent reading, by a due application, and steady attention of mind, a man of extraordinary sagacity and understanding may come to understand the principles and demonstrations of it, and those of a more ordinary capacity with the help of a teacher, may come to the knowledge of it. So when we say that the scriptures are plain in all things necessary to faith, and a good life, we do not mean that every man at first hearing or reading of these things in it, shall perfectly understand them; but by diligent reading and consideration, if he be of good apprehension and capacity, he may come to a sufficient knowledge of them; and if he be of a meaner capacity, and be willing to learn, he may, by the help of a teacher, be brought to understand them without any great pains; and such teachers God hath appointed in his church for this very purpose, and a succession of them to continue to the end of the world.

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In a word, when we ſay the ſcriptures are plain to all capacities, in all things neceſſary, we mean, that any man of ordinary capacity, by his own diligence and care, in conjunction with the helps and advantages which GOD hath appointed, and in the due uſe of them, may attain to the knowledge of every thing neceſſary to his ſalvation; and that there is no book in the world more plain, and better fitted to teach a man any art or ſcience, than the bible is to direct and inſtruct men in the way to heaven; and it is every man's fault if he be ignorant of any thing neceſſary for him to believe, or do, in order to his eternal happineſs.

III. Good men are likewiſe ſecured from fatal errors in religion, by the infallible promiſe of GOD, if ſo be that with honeſt minds and due diligence they apply themſelves to the underſtanding of this rule, and make uſe of the means of inſtruction which GOD hath provided for that purpoſe. GOD hath promiſed "to guide and teach the humble and meek;" that is, ſuch as are of a ſubmiſſive and teachable temper, deſirous and diligent to be inſtructed in the truth. Prov. ii. 3, 4, 5. "If thou incline thine ear to "wiſdom, and apply thine heart to underſtanding; "yea, if thou crieſt after knowledge, and lifteſt up "thy voice for underſtanding; if thou ſeekeſt her "as ſilver, and ſearcheſt for her as for hid treaſures; "then ſhalt thou underſtand the fear of the LORD, "and find the knowledge of GOD." And here in the text our SAVIOUR aſſures us, "that if any man "be deſirous to do his will, he ſhall know of the doc-"trine, whether it be of GOD, or whether he ſpake "of himſelf;" i. e. he ſhall be able to diſcern the doctrines which are from God. This

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This is the provision which GOD hath made for our security from fatal mistakes in religion; and this is in all respects a better security, and more likely to guide and conduct us safely to heaven, than any infallible church; and that for these reasons.

First, because it is much more certain that GOD hath made this provision which I have mentioned, than that there is an infallible church appointed and assisted by him to this purpose. That the scriptures are an infallible and adequate rule, and sufficiently plain in all things necessary, I have already proved; and I add further, that this was the constant judgment of the ancient church, and so declared by the unanimous consent of the fathers of it for many ages; and that all councils in their determination of faith, proceeded upon this rule, till the second council of Nice.

I have likewise proved, that GOD hath provided a succession of pastors and teachers in his church, to instruct us in this rule; and that we have GOD's infallible promise for our security from dangerous errors and mistakes, if with an honest mind and due diligence we apply our selves to understand this rule, and make use of the means of instruction which GOD hath provided for that purpose.

But that there is an infallible church appointed and assisted by GOD, to declare and determine matters of faith, and to be an infallible interpreter of scripture, is not certain, because there is no clear and express text of scripture to that purpose, that any church whatsoever, much less that the church of Rome hath this power and privilege.

Nay, I add further, that it is impossible, accord-

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ing to the principles of the church of Rome, that this ſhould be proved from ſcripture; becauſe, according to their principles, we cannot know either which are the true books of ſcripture, or what is the true ſenſe of ſcripture, but from the authority and infallible declaration of that church. And if ſo, then the infallibility of the church muſt be firſt known, and proved, before we can either know the ſcriptures or the ſenſe of them; and yet till we know the ſcriptures, and the ſenſe of them, nothing can be proved by them. Now to pretend to prove the infallibility of their church by ſcripture, and at the ſame time to declare, that which are the true books of ſcripture, and what is the true ſenſe of them, can only be proved by the infallible authority of their church, is a plain and ſhameful circle, out of which there is no way to eſcape; and conſequently that GOD hath appointed an infallible church is impoſſible, according to their principles, ever to be proved from ſcripture, and the thing is capable of no other proof. For that GOD will infallibly aſſiſt any ſociety of men, is not to be known, but by divine revelation. So that unleſs they can prove it by ſome other revelation than that of ſcripture (which they do not pretend to) the thing is not to be proved at all. Yes, they ſay, by the notes and marks of the true church; but what thoſe marks are muſt either be known from ſcripture, or ſome other divine revelation, and then the ſame difficulty returns; beſides that one of the moſt eſſential marks of the true church muſt be the profeſſion of the true faith; and then it muſt firſt be known which is the true faith, before we can know which is the true church; and

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yet they ſay, that no man can learn the true faith, but from the true church; and this runs them unavoidably into another circle as ſhameful as the other. So that which way ſoever they go to prove an infallible church, they are ſhut up in a plain circle, and muſt either prove the ſcriptures by the church, and the church by the ſcriptures; or the true church by the true faith, and the true faith by the true church.

Secondly, this proviſion and ſecurity which I have mentioned, is more humane, better accommodated and ſuited to the nature of man; becauſe it doth not ſuppoſe and need a ſtanding and perpetual miracle, as the other way of an infallible church doth. All inſpiration is ſupernatural and miraculous, and this infallible aſſiſtance which the church of Rome claims to her ſelf, muſt either be ſuch as the apoſtles had, which was by immediate inſpiration, or ſomething equal to it, and alike ſupernatural: but God does not work miracles without need, or continue them when there is no occaſion for them. When God delivered the law to the people of Iſrael, it was accompanied with miracles, and the prophets which he ſent to them from time to time, had an immediate inſpiration; but their ſupreme judicature, or their general council, which they call the ſanhedrim, was not infallibly aſſiſted in the expounding of the law, when doubts and difficulties aroſe about it; no, nor in judging of true and falſe prophets; but they determined this, and all other emergent caſes, by the ſtanding revelation and rule of their written law; and that they were not infallibly aſſiſted, is evident from the great errors they fell into, "in making "void the commandments of God by their traditions,"

" tions," and in their rejecting and crucifying the true MESSIAS, and the SON of GOD. SERM. LXXXVIII.

In like manner the apoſtles and firſt teachers of the chriſtian religion, were immediately inſpired, and miraculouſly aſſiſted in the publiſhing of the chriſtian doctrine, and for the ſpeedy, and more effectual propagating and planting of it in the world, in deſpite of the violent prejudices that were againſt it, and the fierce oppoſition that was made to it. But when this was done, this miraculous and extraordinary aſſiſtance ceaſed, and GOD left the chriſtian religion to be preſerved and continued by more humane and ordinary ways, the doctrines of it being committed to writing for a ſtanding rule of faith and practice in all ages, and an order of men appointed to inſtruct people in thoſe doctrines, with a promiſe to ſecure both teachers and people that ſincerely deſire to know, and do the will of GOD, from all fatal errors and miſtakes about things neceſſary to their eternal ſalvation; and this is a proviſion more likely to be made by GOD, and better ſuited to the nature of man, than the perpetual and needleſs miracle of an inſpired, or any otherwiſe infallible church.

Thirdly, this way is likewiſe more agreeable to the nature of religion, and the virtue of faith. The deſign of an infallible church is to ſecure all that continue in the communion of it, againſt all poſſibility of error in matters of faith. The queſtion now is not, whether an infallible church would do this? but whether that church which arrogates infallibility to itſelf, does not pretend to do this? and if they could do it, it would not be agreeable to the nature of religion, and the virtue of faith. For faith,

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which is the principle of all religious actions, would be no virtue, if it were neceſſary. A true and right belief can be no virtue, where a man is infallibly ſecured againſt error. There is the ſame reaſon of virtuous and criminal actions; and as there can be no crime or fault in doing what a man cannot help; ſo neither can there be any virtue. All virtuous actions are matter of praiſe and commendation, and therefore it can be no virtue in any man; becauſe it deſerves no commendation, to believe and own that the ſun ſhines at noonday, when he ſees it does ſo. No more would it be a virtue in any man, and deſerve praiſe, to believe aright, who is in a church, wherein he is infallibly ſecured againſt all errors in matters of faith. Make any thing neceſſary, and impoſſible to be otherwiſe, and the doing of it ceaſes to be a virtue. GOD hath ſo framed religion, that the evidence of truth, and the means of coming to the knowledge of it, as to be a ſufficient ſecurity to men of honeſt minds and teachable tempers, againſt all fatal and final miſtakes concerning things neceſſary to ſalvation; but not ſo, that every man that is of ſuch a church, ſhould be infallibly ſecured againſt all errors in matters of faith; and this on purpoſe to try the virtue and diſpoſition of men, whether they will be at the pains to ſearch for truth, and when it is propoſed to them with ſufficient evidence, tho' not by an infallible hand, "they "will receive it in the love of it, that they may be "ſaved."

Fourthly, this is as much ſecurity againſt errors in matters of faith, as GOD hath provided againſt ſin and vice in matters of practice; and ſince a right belief is only in order to a good life, a man would be hard

hard put to it, to give a wiſe reaſon why GOD ſhould take greater care for the infallible ſecurity of mens faith, than of their obedience. The reaſon pretended why GOD ſhould make ſuch infallible proviſion for a right faith, is, for the better ſecurity of mens eternal ſalvation and happineſs. Now the virtues of a good life have a more direct and immediate influence upon that, than the moſt orthodox belief. "The "end of the commandment (i. e. of the declaration "of the goſpel) is charity." In the chriſtian religion that which mainly avails to our juſtification and ſalvation is, "a faith that worketh by charity, and the "keeping of the commandments of GOD. He that "heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them "(ſaith our bleſſed LORD) I will liken him to a "wiſe man that built his houſe upon a rock." and again, "not every one that ſaith unto me, LORD, "LORD, (i. e. makes profeſſion of faith in me) "ſhall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he "that doth the will of my FATHER which is in "heaven;" and again, "if ye know theſe things, "happy are ye if ye do them." And the apoſtle St. Peter exhorts chriſtians "to add to their faith "knowledge, and virtue, and godlineſs, and bro-"therly kindneſs, and charity, that ſo an abundant "entrance may be miniſtred to them, into the ever-"laſting kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOUR "JESUS CHRIST." So that the virtues of a good life have the greateſt influence upon our ſalvation, and the main ſtreſs of chriſtianity is to be laid there. And therefore whatever reaſon can be aſſign'd, why GOD ſhould provide for the infallible ſecurity of our faith, is much ſtronger, why an equal proviſion

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ſhould be made to ſecure holineſs, and obedience of life; becauſe without this, faith cannot infallibly attain its end, which is, "the ſalvation of our ſouls." But this it is granted GOD hath not done, and experience ſhews it; and therefore it is unreaſonable to ſuppoſe that he hath done the other. It is ſufficient, that in both kinds he hath done that which is ſufficient to make us capable of happineſs, if we be not wanting to ourſelves; the reſt he hath left to the ſincerity of our endeavours; expecting that we on our part, ſhould "work out our ſalvation with fear and "trembling;" and "give all diligence to make our "calling and election ſure." And if GOD hath made ſuch proviſion by the goſpel, for all that enjoy the light and advantage of it, that none can miſcarry without their own fault; then both his goodneſs and wiſdom are ſufficiently acquitted without an infallible guide and judge in matters of faith; and that irreverent way of arguing in the canon law might well have been ſpared; that of neceſſity there muſt be an infallible judge of controverſies in religion; *aliter Dominus non videretur fuiſſe diſcretus*, "otherwiſe GOD would "not ſeem to have ordered matters diſcreetly."

But what infallible ſecurity ſoever they have in the church of Rome, as to matters of faith, they are certainly the worſt provided of wholſom and ſafe directions for the conſciences and lives of men, of any church in the world. No religion that I know of in the world, ever had ſuch lewd and ſcandalous caſuiſts. Witneſs the moral divinity of the jeſuits, which hath been ſo expoſed to the world, not only by thoſe of our religion, but by their own writers alſo. Nor is this miſchief only confined to that order; their caſuiſts

ſuiſts in general, and even the more ancient of them, who writ before the order of jeſuits appeared in the world, have given ſuch a liberty, and looſe, to great immorality in ſeveral kinds, as is infinitely to the the reproach of the beſt and pureſt religion in the world. Inſomuch that Sir Thomas More himſelf, who was a great zealot for that religion, could not forbear to make a loud complaint of it, and to paſs this ſevere cenſure upon the generality of their caſuiſts: "that their great buſineſs ſeem'd to be, not "to keep men from ſin, but to teach them *quàm* "*propè ad peccatum liceat accedere ſine peccato*; how "near to ſin they might lawfully come without ſin-"ning." In the mean time the conſciences of men are like to be well directed, when inſtead of giving men plain rules for the government of their hearts and lives, and clear reſolutions of the material doubts, which frequently occur in human life, they intangle them in niceties and endleſs ſcrupuloſities, teaching them to ſplit hairs in divinity, and how with great art and cunning they may avoid the committing of any ſin, and yet come as near to it as poſſible. This is a thing of a moſt dangerous conſequence to the ſouls of men; and if men be but once encouraged to paſs to the utmoſt bounds of what is lawful, the next ſtep will be into that which is unlawful. SERM. LXXXVIII.

So that unleſs faith without works will ſave men, notwithſtanding the infallible ſecurity which they pretend to give men of a ſound and right belief (if it were really as much as they talk of) the ſalvation of men would ſtill be in great hazard and uncertainty, for want of better and ſafer directions for a good life, than are ordinarily to be met with in the caſuiſtical writings

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writings of that church; eſpecially if we conſider that the ſcriptures are locked up from the people in an unknown tongue, where the ſureſt and plaineſt directions for a good life are moſt plentifully to be had; inſomuch, that a man had better want all the volumes of caſuiſtical divinity, that ever were written in the world, than to be without the bible; by the diligent ſtudying of which book alone, he may ſooner learn the way to heaven, than by all the books in the world without it.

Fifthly and laſtly, this proviſion which GOD hath made, is, when all is done, as good a ſecurity againſt fatal errors and miſtakes in religion, as an infallible church could give, if there were one; and it is as good a way to prevent and put an end to controverſies in religion, ſo far as it is neceſſary that they ſhould be prevented, and have an end put to them: and theſe are the two great reaſons why an infallible judge is ſo importunately demanded, and inſiſted upon. I ſhall ſpeak to theſe diſtinctly, and ſeverally; but becauſe they will require a longer diſcourſe than the time will allow, I ſhall not enter upon them at preſent, but refer them to another opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON LXXXIX.

Honesty the best preservative against dangerous mistakes in religion.

JOHN vii. 17.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of GOD, *or whether I speak of myself.*

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The third sermon on this text.

WHEN I made my entrance into these words, I proposed from this text,

First, to shew that an honest and sincere mind, and a hearty desire and endeavour to do the will of GOD, is the greatest security and best preservative against dangerous errors and mistakes in matters of religion.

In the next place, I proceeded to remove an objection, to which my discourse upon this subject might seem liable. Some perhaps might ask, Is every good man then secure from all error and mistake in matters of religion? this is a mighty privilege indeed. But do we not find the contrary in experience, that an honest heart, and a weak head do often meet together? for answer to this, I laid down several propositions;

By the last of which I shew'd, that GOD hath made abundant provision for our security from fatal and dangerous errors in religion, both by the infallible rule of the holy scripture, and by sufficient means of instruction to help us to understand this rule, and by his infallible promise of assisting us, if with honest

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nest minds, and a due diligence we apply our selves to the understanding of this rule, and the use of these means. And this, I told you, was in all respects a better security, and more likely to conduct us safe to heaven, than any infallible church whatsoever; and that for five reasons; four of which I have already treated of, and now proceed to the fifth, and last, viz.

Because this provision which I have shewn God hath made, is both as good a security against fatal errors and mistakes in religion, as an infallible church could give, if there were one: and it is likewise as good a way to prevent and put an end to controversies in religion, so far as it is necessary they should be prevented, or have an end put to them. And these are the two great reasons why an infallible judge is so importunately demanded, and insisted upon. I shall speak to these two points distinctly, and severally.

First, because this is as good a security against fatal errors and mistakes in religion, as an infallible church could give, if there were one. For an infallible church, if there were such an one upon earth, could not infallibly secure particular christians against errors in faith, any other way, than by the definition and declaration of those who are infallible in that church. And there are but three that pretend to it; either the pope, or a general council, or the pope and a general council agreeing in the same definitions. Not the pope by himself, nor the general council without the pope; because the church which pretends to infallibility, is not agreed, that either of these alone is infallible, and therefore their definitions

definitions can be no certain, much leſs infallible foundation of faith; no, not to that church which pretends to infallibility. So that if there be an infallible oracle in that church, it muſt be the pope and council in conjunction, or the definition of a council confirmed by the pope. Now in that caſe, either the council was infallible in its definitions, before they had the pope's confirmation, or not. If the council was infallible in its definitions, before they had the pope's confirmation; then the council alone, and of it ſelf, was infallible (which a great part of the church of Rome deny) and then it needed not the pope's confirmation to make it infallible: or elſe a general council is not infallible in its definitions, before they receive the pope's confirmation; and then the pope's confirmation cannot make it ſo: for that which was not infallibly defined by the council, cannot be made infallible by the pope's confirmation.

But there is another difficulty yet: it is a maxim generally received, and that even in the Roman church, "that the definitions of a general council, "confirmed by the pope, are not obligatory, unleſs "they be received by the univerſal church." From whence theſe two great inconveniences will unavoidably follow.

I. That no man is obliged to believe ſuch definitions, 'till he certainly know that they are received by the univerſal church; which how he ſhould certainly, much leſs infallibly know, I cannot underſtand; unleſs he either ſpeak with all the chriſtians in the world, or the repreſentatives of all particular churches return back and meet again in council, to

SERM LXXXIX declare that the univerſal church hath received their definitions; which I think was never yet done.

II. It will follow, that the definitions of a general council confirmed by the pope, are not infallible, 'till they be received by the univerſal church. For if they were infallible without that, they would be obligatory without it; becauſe an infallible definition, if we know it to be ſo, lays an obligation to believe it, whether it be receiv'd by the univerſal church or not. And if ſuch definitions are not infallible 'till they be received by the univerſal church, they cannot become infallible afterwards; becauſe if the definitions were not infallible before, they cannot be received as ſuch by the univerſal church, nor by the meer reception of them, be made to be infallible definitions, if they were not ſo before.

But if we ſhould paſs over all theſe difficulties, there is a greater yet behind, and that is, ſuppoſing the definitions of general councils confirmed by the pope to be infallible, particular chriſtians cannot be ſecured infallibly from error without the knowledge of thoſe definitions. And there are but two ways imaginable of conveying this knowledge to them: either by the living voice of their particular paſtors, whom they are implicitly to believe in theſe matters; but particular paſtors are fallible (as they themſelves grant) and therefore their words can neither be an infallible foundation of faith, or an infallible means of conveying it; and it is unreaſonable, they ſay, for men to own themſelves to be fallible, to require an implicit belief to be given to them: or elſe the knowledge of the definitions of councils muſt be conveyed to particular chriſtians by writing; and if ſo, then there will only be

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an infallible rule, but no living infallible judge. And if an infallible rule will ſerve the turn, we have the ſcriptures, which we are ſure are infallible, and therefore at leaſt as good as any other rule. But they ſay, that the definitions of councils give us an infallible interpretation of ſcripture, and therefore are of greater advantage to us. But do not the definitions of councils ſometimes alſo need explication, that we may know the certain ſenſe of them, without which we cannot know the doctrines defined? Yes certainly, they need explication as much as ſcripture, if there be any difference about the meaning of them; and there have been, and ſtill are, great differences among thoſe of their own church about the meaning of them. And if the explications of general councils need themſelves to be explained, then there is nothing got by them, and we are but where we were before: for differences about the meaning of the definitions of general councils, make as great difficulties and uncertainties in faith, as the differences about the meaning of ſcripture.

Well, but the people have the living voice of their particular paſtors to explain the definitions of councils to them. But this does not help the matter neither, for theſe two reaſons.

1. Becauſe particular paſtors have no authority to explain the definitions of general councils. The council of Trent hath, by expreſs decree, reſerved to the pope, and to him only, the power to explain the definitions of the council, if any difference ariſe about the meaning of them. So that if there be any difference about the true ſenſe and meaning of any of the definitions of the council, particular paſtors have no authority to explain them; and where there is no

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doubt or difference about the meaning of them, there is no occaſion for the explication of them.

2. But ſuppoſe they had authority to explain them, this can be no infallible ſecurity to the people, that they explain them right; both becauſe particular paſtors are fallible; and likewiſe becauſe we ſee in experience, that they differ in their explications; witneſs the biſhop of Condom's expoſition of the catholick faith, and of the definitions of the council of Trent, which in many material points very different from that of Bellarmine, and many other famous doctors of that church. And which is more, witneſs the many differences betwixt Ambroſius, Catharinus, and Dominicus Aſoto, about the definitions of that council, in which they were both preſent, and heard the debates, and themſelves bore a great part in them. Now if they who were preſent at the framing of the definitions of that Council, cannot agree about the meaning of them, much leſs can it be expected from thoſe that were abſent.

Secondly, this proviſion which I have mentioned, is likewiſe as good a way to prevent and put an end to controverſies in religion, ſo far as it is neceſſary they ſhould be prevented, or have an end put to them, as any infallible church would be, if there were one: and this is another reaſon why an infallible church is ſo much inſiſted upon, that there may be ſome way and means for a final deciſion of controverſies, which the ſcriptures cannot be, becauſe they are only a dead rule, which can end no controverſy without a living judge ready at hand, to interpret and apply that rule upon emergent occaſions.

It is not neceſſary that all controverſies in religion ſhould

ſhould either be prevented, or decided: this the church which pretends to be infallible, cannot pretend to have done; becauſe there are manifold controverſies, even in the church of Rome her ſelf, concerning matters of religion, which ſtill remain undecided; and in their commentaries upon ſcripture, many differences about the ſenſe of ſeveral texts, concerning which ſhe hath not thought fit to give an infallible interpretation. And where their popes, and ſeveral of their general councils, have thought fit to meddle with ſcripture, they have applied and interpreted texts more improperly and abſurdly, than even their private doctors. And which is more, in differences about points of faith, which are pretended on both ſides to be fundamental, this church hath not thought fit to put an end to them by her infallible deciſion, after two hundred years brangling about them. For inſtance, in that fierce and long difference about the immaculate conception of the bleſſed virgin, which on both ſides, is pretended to be an article of faith, and for which contrary revelations of their canoniz'd ſaints are ſo frequently pretended; and yet neither pope, nor general council, have thought fit to exert their infallibility for the deciſion of this controverſy. So that if their church had this talent of infallibility ever committed to them, they have, with "the ſlothful ſervant, laid it up in a napkin;" and, according to our SAVIOUR's rule, have long ſince forfeited it, for not making uſe of it. SERM. LXXXIX

And whereas it is pretended, that the ſcripture is but a dead rule, which can end no controverſies without a living judge ready at hand, to interpret and apply that rule upon emergent occaſions; the ſame objection

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objection lies againſt them, unleſs a general council, which is their living judge, were always ſitting. For the definitions of their councils in writing are liable to the ſame, and greater objections, than the written rule of the ſcriptures.

The ſum of all is this. In differences about leſſer matters, mutual charity and forbearance will ſecure the peace of the church, tho' the differences remain undecided; and in greater matters, an infallible rule ſearched into with an honeſt mind, and due diligence, and with the help of good inſtruction, is more likely to extinguiſh and put an end to ſuch differences, than any infallible judge, if there were one; becauſe an humble and honeſt mind is more likely to yield to reaſon, than a perverſe and cavilling temper is to ſubmit to the ſentence of an infallible judge, unleſs it were back'd with an inquiſition. The church of Rome ſuppoſeth her ſelf infallible, and yet notwithſtanding that, ſhe finds that ſome queſtion and deny her infallibility, and then her ſentence ſignifies nothing. And of thoſe who own it, many diſpute the ſenſe and meaning of her ſentence; and whether they deny the infallibility of her ſentence, or diſpute the ſenſe of it, in neither of theſe caſes will it prove effectual to the deciding of any difference.

But after all this proviſion which we pretend God hath made for honeſt and ſincere minds, do we not ſee that men fall into dangerous and damnable errors, who yet cannot, without great uncharitableneſs, be ſuppoſed not to be ſincerely deſirous to know the truth, and to do the will of God?

To this I ſhall briefly return theſe two things.

1. That the ſame errors are not equally damnable

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to all. The innocent and (humanely ſpeaking) almoſt invincible prejudices of education in ſome perſons even againſt a fundamental truth; the different capacities of men, and the different means of conviction afforded to them; the greater and leſſer degrees of obſtinacy, and a faulty will in oppoſing the truths propoſed to them; all theſe, and perhaps ſeveral other conſiderations beſides, may make a great difference in the guilt of mens errors, and the danger of them. SERM. LXXXIX

II. When all is done, the matter muſt be left to GOD, who only knoweth the hearts of the children of men. We cannot ſee into the hearts of men, nor know all their circumſtances, and how they may have provoked GOD to forſake them, and give them up to error and deluſion, "becauſe they would not receive "the truth in the love of it, that they might be "ſaved." And as on the one hand GOD will conſider all mens circumſtances, and the diſadvantages they were under for coming to the knowledge of the truth, and make allowance to men for their invincible errors, and forgive them upon a general repentance: ſo on the other hand, he who ſees the inſincerity of men, and that the errors of their underſtandings did proceed from groſs faults of their lives, will deal with them accordingly. But if men be honeſt and ſincere, GOD, who hath ſaid, "if any man "will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine," will certainly be as good as his word.

It now remains only to draw ſome inferences from this diſcourſe, and they ſhall be theſe three.

Firſt, from this text, and what hath been diſcourſed upon it, we may infer how ſlender and ill-grounded the

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the pretence of the church of Rome to infallibility is; whether they place it in the pope, or in a general council, or in both. The last is the most general opinion; and yet it is hard to understand how infallibility can result from the pope's confirmation of a general council, when neither the council was infallible in framing its definitions, nor the pope in confirming them. If the council were infallible in framing them, then they needed no confirmation: if they were not, then infallibility is only in the pope that confirms them, and then it is the pope only that is infallible. But no man that reads these words of our SAVIOUR, "if any man will do his will, he shall know "of the doctrine," would ever imagine that the bishop of Rome (whoever he shall happen to be) were secured from all fatal errors in matters of faith, much less that he were endowed with an infallible spirit, in judging what doctrines are from GOD, and what not. For it cannot be denied, but that many of their popes have been notoriously wicked and vicious in their lives: nay Bellarmine himself acknowledgeth, that for a succession of fifty popes together, there was not one pious and virtuous man that sat in that chair; and some of their popes have been condemned and deposed for heresy; and yet for all this, the pope, and the governing part of the church, would bear the world in hand that he is infallible. But if this saying of our SAVIOUR be true, "that if any man "will do his will, he shall know of his doctrine, "whether it be of GOD;" then every honest man that sincerely desires to do the will of GOD, hath a fairer pretence to infallibility, and a clearer text for it, than is to be found in the whole bible for the infallibility

bility of the biſhop of Rome. What would the church of Rome give, that there were but as expreſs a text of ſcripture for the infallibility of their popes, as this is for the ſecurity of every good man, in his judgment of doctrines; which makes infallibility needleſs? what an inſufferable noiſe, and what endleſs triumphs would they make upon it, if it had been any where ſaid in the bible, that if any man be biſhop of Rome, and ſit in St. Peter's chair, he ſhall know of my doctrine whether it be of GOD? Had there been but ſuch a text as this, we ſhould never have been troubled with their impertinent citation of texts, and their remote and blind inferences from *paſce oves*, and *ſuper hanc petram*; "feed my ſheep;" and "upon "this rock will I build my church;" to prove the pope's infallibility. And yet no man of ſenſe or reaſon ever extended the text I am ſpeaking to, ſo far as to attempt to prove from it the infallibility of every good man; but only his ſecurity from fatal errors and miſtakes in religion. The largeſt promiſes that are made in ſcripture of ſecurity from error and miſtake about divine things, are made to good men, who ſincerely deſire to do the will of GOD. And if this be ſo, we muſt conclude ſeveral popes to have been the fartheſt from infallibility of any men in the world. And indeed there is not a more compendious way to perſuade men that the chriſtian religion is a fable, than to ſet up a lewd and vicious man for the oracle of it.

Nay, I will go farther yet; that there are no promiſes made in ſcripture, of direction or aſſiſtance, or ſecurity from miſtake, to any church; but the ſame are made in as full and expreſs terms to every good

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man that sincerely desires to know the truth, and to practise it. Is it promised to the church, or to the pastors of it, "I will be with you always?" and hath not our SAVIOUR promised the same to every one that is obedient to his word? John xiv. 23. "If a "man love me, he will keep my words; and my "FATHER will love him, and we will come unto "him, and make our abode with him." And does not the apostle apply the same promise to every good christian, Heb. xiii. 5. "I will never leave thee, nor "forsake thee?" for where is the difference between these expressions? "I will be with you," and "I "will make my abode with him?" "I will be with "you always," and "I will never leave thee, nor "forsake thee?" Is it promised to the church, "that the SPIRIT shall lead her into all truth?" and is not the same promise made to every good man? John xiv. 21. "He that hath my commandments, "and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he "that loveth me, shall be loved of my FATHER; "and I will love him, and will manifest myself to "him;" that is, GOD will reveal his will to those that love him, and keep his commandments. Hath GOD promised "to build his church upon a rock?" and doth not our SAVIOUR use the same metaphor concerning every man that doth the will of GOD? Matt. vii. 24. "whosoever heareth these sayings of "mine, and doth them, is like a wise man that built "his house upon a rock." So that if to be built upon a rock signifies infallibility, it belongs to every good man, who sincerely practiseth what he knows, as much as to any church.

When men are enabled by GOD to work miracles for

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for the confirmation of the doctrines which they deliver, there is great reaſon to believe that they are infallibly aſſiſted in the delivery of thoſe doctrines: but without this, 'tis the vaineſt thing in the world, for any perſon or church to pretend to it; becauſe they offer no evidence fit to ſatisfy any man, that they are ſo aſſiſted: and I do not hear that the pope, among all his privileges, does pretend to the power of miracles.

Secondly, from hence likewiſe we may infer the great reaſon of error and infidelity in the world. If any man be an infidel, it is not the fault of his underſtanding, but of his will; it is not becauſe there is not ſufficient evidence that the chriſtian religion is from GOD, but becauſe mens intereſts and luſts make them partial and incompetent judges of matters of religion. The evidence of the chriſtian religion is ſuch, as recommends it to every man's reaſon and conſcience; ſo that (as St. Paul argues) "if the goſpel be "hid, it is hid to them that are loſt; in whom the "GOD of this world hath blinded the minds of "them that believe not, leſt the light of the glorious "goſpel of CHRIST, who is the image of GOD, "ſhould ſhine unto them," 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

If men did but ſtand indifferent for the entertainment of truth, and were not ſwayed by the intereſt of any luſt or paſſion, I am confident that no man that hath the goſpel fairly propoſed to him, would continue an infidel. If men did but truly live up to the principles of natural religion, they would eaſily be convinced, that the chriſtian religion, which is ſo ſuitable thereto, is from GOD.

Thirdly, and laſtly, what hath been ſaid, is a great

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argument and encouragement to obedience, and holiness of life. Do we desire not to be mistaken about the mind of GOD? let us heartily endeavour to do his will. If we would not be seduced by the error of the wicked, let us take heed of their vicious practices. The best way certainly to preserve a right judgment in matters of religion, is to take great care of a good life. GOD's goodness is such, that he will not suffer any man's judgment to be betrayed into a damnable error, without some vice and fault of his will. The principles of natural religion are born with us, and imprinted upon our minds, so that no man can be ignorant of them, nor need to be mistaken about them; and as for those revelations which GOD hath made of himself to the world, he hath been pleased to accompany them with so much evidence, that an honest and sincere mind may easily discern them from error, and imposture. So our SAVIOUR hath assured us, "that if any man desire to "do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whe-"ther it be of GOD."

On the other hand, if we see any oppose the clear truth, or depart from it, and embrace gross errors and delusions, we may almost certainly conclude, that there is some worldly interest or lust at the bottom of it. So our SAVIOUR has likewise told us, that the reason why "men love darkness rather than light, is, "because their deeds are evil; and every one that "doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the "light, lest his deeds should be reproved." I will conclude this whole discourse with St. Peter's exhortation, the 2d of Pet. iii. 17, 18. "Ye therefore, be-"loved, seeing ye know these things before, beware,

"lest

" lest ye also being led away with the error of the
" wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow
" in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and
" SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. To him be glory,
" both now and for ever. Amen."

SERMON XC.

The nature of covetousness.

LUKE xii. 15.

And he said unto them, take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

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AMong all the irregular appetites of men, there is none that is more common and unreasonable, and of a more universal bad influence upon the hearts and lives of men, than this of covetousness; and therefore in speaking of this vice, I shall strike at the root of a great many others; even of apostacy from GOD's truth and religion, of which covetousness, and the love of this present world, is one of the most common causes. So that if I can contribute any thing to the cure of this great distemper of mens minds, I shall in so doing remove that which is the cause and occasion of a great part of the evils and mischiefs which are in the world. And to this end I have pitched upon these words of our blessed SAVIOUR to his hearers; " and he said unto
" them, take heed and beware of covetousness; for
" a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the
" things which he possesseth." In

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In which words are these three things observable:

First, the manner of the caution which our SAVIOUR here gives, "take heed and beware;" he doubles it, to shew the great need and concernment of it.

Secondly, the matter of the caution, or the vice which our SAVIOUR here warns his hearers against, and that is covetousness, "take heed and beware of "covetousness."

Thirdly, the reason of this caution, "because a "man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the "things which he possesseth." Humane life is sustain'd by a little, and therefore abundance is not necessary, either to the support, or comfort of it. 'Tis not a great estate and vast possessions that make a man happy in this world; but a mind that is equal to its condition, whatever it be.

First, the manner of the caution which our SAVIOUR here gives, "take heed and beware." This is a peculiar kind of caution, and no where else, or upon any other occasion, that I know of, used in scripture; in which, for the greater emphasis and weight, the words of caution are doubled, as if the matter were of so much concernment, that no caution about it could be too much; to signify to us both the great danger of this sin of covetousness, and the great care men ought to use to preserve themselves from it.

I. The great danger of this sin; how apt we are to fall into this vice, and of how pernicious a consequence it is to those in whom it reigns.

1. How apt we are to fall into this vice: and excepting those vices which are immediately founded

founded in a man's natural temper and constitution, there is none that men have a more universal propension to, than this of covetousness. For there are two things which humane nature does more especially desire to be secured against, which are want, and contempt: and riches seem to be a certain remedy against both these evils. And because men think they can never be sufficiently secured against these, therefore their desire of riches grows endless and insatiable; so that unless men be very jealous and watchful over themselves, this desire will grow upon them, and enlarge it self beyond all bounds.

2. As men are very apt to fall into this vice, so is it of very pernicious consequence to those in whom it reigns. The mischief of it is very great, and very extensive: So St. Paul tells us, 1 Tim. vi. 8, 9, 10. where he presseth men to be contented with a small competency of the things of this life, because of the great danger and mischief of a covetous mind; "having food and raiment, let us be therewith "content, But they that will be rich (that is, they "that are bent and resolved upon being rich) fall "into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish "and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruc-"tion and perdition. For the love of money is the "root of all evil." But this I shall speak more fully to, when I come to shew the great evil and unreasonableness of this vice.

II. This earnest kind of caution, as it signifies the great danger of this sin of covetousness, so likewise the great care that men ought to use to preserve themselves from it; for the greater the danger is in any kind, so much the greater care should be used

for

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for the avoiding of it. Men are not ſo ſolicitouſly concerned to defend themſelves againſt a ſlight miſchief; but when a terrible one threatens us, we ſhould be continually upon our guard againſt it, and ſummon all our ſtrength and force to reſiſt it. Thus much for the manner of the caution.

I proceed to the ſecond thing to be conſider'd in the text, viz. The matter of the caution, or the vice which our SAVIOUR here warns his hearers againſt, and that is covetouſneſs; "take heed and beware of "covetouſneſs." And in ſpeaking of this, I ſhall conſider theſe two things.

I. Wherein the nature of this vice conſiſts.

II. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the great evil and unreaſonableneſs of it. I ſhall be large in both.

I. For the nature of this vice of covetouſneſs. The ſhorteſt deſcription that I can give of it is this; "that it is an inordinate deſire and love of riches;" but when this deſire and love are inordinate, is not ſo eaſy to be determined. And therefore that we may the better underſtand what this ſin of covetouſneſs is, which our SAVIOUR doth ſo earneſtly caution againſt, it will be requiſite to conſider more particularly wherein the vice and fault of it doth conſiſt; that whilſt we are ſpeaking againſt covetouſneſs, we may not under that general word condemn any thing that is commendable or lawful. To the end then that we may the more clearly and diſtinctly underſtand wherein the nature of this vice doth conſiſt, I ſhall,

Firſt, endeavour to ſhew what is not condemned under this name of covetouſneſs, either in ſcripture, or according to right reaſon: And,

Secondly,

Secondly, what is condemned by either of theſe as a plain inſtance or branch of this ſin. SERM. XC.

Firſt, what things are not condemned under the name of covetouſneſs, either in ſcripture, or according to right reaſon, which yet have ſome appearance of it; namely, theſe three things.

1. Not a provident care about the things of this preſent life.

2. Not a regular induſtry and diligence for the obtaining of them: Nor

3. Every degree of love and affection to them. I mention theſe three, becauſe they may all ſeem to be condemned by ſcripture, as parts or degrees of this vice, but really are not.

1. Not a provident care about the things of this preſent life. This indeed ſeems to be condemned in ſcripture as a branch of covetouſneſs; namely, in our SAVIOUR's ſermon upon the mount, Mat. vi. 25. "Take no thought for your life, what ye ſhall eat, "or what ye ſhall drink; nor yet for your body, "what ye ſhall put on." Here our SAVIOUR ſeems to forbid all care, even about the neceſſaries of life, meat, and drink, and clothing; much more about the delights and conveniences of it. But this is not abſolutely, and in ordinary caſes, intended by our SAVIOUR to be condemned, as I ſhall ſhew by and by under the next head.

2. Neither is a regular induſtry and diligence for the obtaining of theſe things condemned in ſcripture; tho' this alſo ſeems to be prohibited by our SAVIOUR in the ſame chapter, ver. 26. "Behold "the fowls of the air: for they ſow not, neither do "they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your hea-

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" venly FATHER feedeth them;" and ver. 28. " Why take ye thought for raiment? consider the " lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, " neither do they spin." In which words our SAVIOUR seems to intimate, that we ought to depend upon the providence of GOD for food and raiment, and to use no more industry for the obtaining of them, than the fowls of the air do, or the lilies of the field: and the same may seem to be collected out of this chapter of St. Luke: for after our SAVIOUR had in my text cautioned them against covetousness, and spoken to them a parable to that purpose, " of a rich man who enlarged his barns, and laid " up goods for many years," He infers from thence, ver. 22, that men should take no thought for the things of this life, nor use any industry about them; " and he said unto his disciples, therefore I say unto " you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall " eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on."

Now to avoid all inconvenience from our SAVIOUR's words, I think that it is commonly said by interpreters, that he does here only condemn a distrustful and anxious care about the things of this life, and an over-solicitous industry and diligence for the obtaining of them; but that he allows a prudent care, and regular industry about these things: and this were very well said, if it would agree with the scope and design of our SAVIOUR's discourse; but the instances which he gives of the fowls of the air, and the lilies of the field, which are sufficiently provided for without any care and industry of theirs, and which he seems to set before us for a pattern, " behold (says he) the fowls of the air." I say, these instances,

inſtances, which he gives, ſeem to exclude even all regular and ordinary care and diligence about theſe things. SERM. XC.

What ſhall we ſay then, that our SAVIOUR intended by his religion to take men off from all labour and induſtry in their callings? this ſeems to be unreaſonable; and indeed ſo it certainly were, if our SAVIOUR had given this for a ſtanding and ordinary rule to all chriſtians; and not only ſo, but contrary to the apoſtles doctrine, who conſtantly charged chriſtians to labour with great diligence in their callings, that they might be able to provide for themſelves and their families.

But this diſcourſe of our SAVIOUR's was not intended for a general and ſtanding rule to all chriſtians; but only deſigned for his diſciples, to take them off from all care about the things of this life, that they might attend upon his perſon, and wholly give up themſelves to that work to which he had called them. And therefore St. Luke takes notice, that after he had cautioned his hearers in general againſt covetouſneſs, he applies himſelf particularly to his diſciples, and tells them that he would have them ſo far from this vice of covetouſneſs, that they ſhould not ſo much as uſe that ordinary care and induſtry about the things of this life, which is not only lawful, but neceſſary for men in all ordinary caſes, ver. 22. "And he ſaid unto his diſciples, therefore I ſay unto "you, take no thought for your life, what you ſhall "eat." And this agrees very well with the direction which our SAVIOUR gave to his diſciples, when he firſt ſent them forth to preach, Matt. x. 9. "Pro-"vide neither gold nor ſilver, nor braſs in your pur-

ſes, neither coat nor ſcrip;" which no man ever underſtood as a general law to all chriſtians, but as a particular precept to the apoſtles at that time.

And if this be our SAVIOUR's meaning, there is then no reaſon to think, that this caution againſt covetouſneſs does forbid men to uſe a provident care and regular induſtry about the things of this life.

3. Nor is every degree of love and affection to the things of this world condemned in ſcripture, as any branch, or part of this vice of covetouſneſs; but ſuch a love of the things of this world as is truly conſiſtent with the love of GOD, and a due and a ſerious care of our ſouls, is allowed both by ſcripture and reaſon. St. John indeed ſeems to condemn all love of the world, and of the things of it, as utterly inconſiſtent with the love of GOD, 1 John ii. 15. "Love not the world, neither the things that "are in the world; if any man love the world, the "love of the FATHER is not in him:" But this is according to the hebrew phraſe and manner of ſpeaking, to forbid things abſolutely, which are to be underſtood only comparatively. So Matt. vi. 19. "Lay "not for up your ſelves treaſures upon earth; but lay "up for your ſelves treaſures in heaven;" i. e. be not ſo ſolicitous for the good things of this world, as for the glory and happineſs of the next. And Luke xii. 4. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body;" that is, fear them not ſo much as "him that can de-"ſtroy both body and ſoul in hell:" and Luke xiv. 26. "If any man come unto me, and hate not his "father and mother, and all that he hath;" that is, if he do not love me more than all theſe things, "he cannot be my diſciple:" and John vi. 27. La-

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"bour not for the meat which perisheth, but for "that which endureth to everlasting life;" that is, labour not so much for the one as for the other, be not so solicitous about the things of this life, as about the great concernments of eternity. So likewise Coloss. iii. 2. "Set your affections on things above, not on "things on the earth;" i. e. set them more on things above, than on earthly things. So here, "love not "the world, neither the things of the world;" that is, do not over-value them, do not love them so much as not to be able to part with them for CHRIST; for if any man thus love the world, he does not love GOD as he ought. So that when the scripture commands us not to love the world, this is to be understood comparatively, that we should not love these things in comparison of GOD, and the great concernments of another world: but it does not forbid us to love these things in a due degree, and with a due subordination to those things which are more excellent, and of infinitely greater concernment to us. For nothing can be more inconsistent than to recommend to men diligence in their callings and employments (as the scripture frequently does) and that in order to the attaining of the good things of this life; and yet to forbid us to love these things at all. For if men have no degree of love to them, the best argument to diligence for the obtaining of them would be taken away. Besides that we are commanded in scripture to be thankful to GOD for bestowing on us the blessings of this life, and we are to love him upon this account. Now can any man love the giver, for bestowing such gifts upon him, which, if he do as he ought, he must not love?

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You ſee then what thoſe things are, which the ſcripture does not condemn as any branch or degree of this vice of covetouſneſs; a provident care, and a regular induſtry, and ſuch a degree of love to the things of this world, as is conſiſtent with the love of GOD, and the care of our ſouls.

Secondly, I come now to ſhew what is condemned in ſcripture under the name of covetouſneſs; and by this we ſhall beſt underſtand wherein the nature of this ſin doth conſiſt. Now covetouſneſs is a word of a large ſignification, and comprehends in it moſt of the irregularities of mens minds, either in deſiring or getting, or in poſſeſſing, and uſing an eſtate. I ſhall ſpeak to each of theſe ſeverally.

I. Covetouſneſs in the deſire of riches, conſiſts in an eager and unſatiable deſire after the things of this world. This the ſcripture condemns, tho' it be free from injuſtice, as it ſeldom happens to be. This inſatiable deſire of wealth, GOD plainly condemns by his prophet, Iſa. v. 8. "Wo unto them that join houſe "to houſe, and lay field to field, till there be no "place, that they may be placed alone in the midſt of "the earth." And this is that which our SAVIOUR here in the text ſeems to have a more particular reſpect to, when he cautions men againſt the ſin of covetouſneſs, as appears both from the reaſon which he gives of this caution, and from the parable whereby he illuſtrates it. From the reaſon which he gives of this caution, "take heed and beware of covetouſneſs; "for the life of man doth not conſiſt in the abun-"dance of the things which he poſſeſſeth." As if he had ſaid, take great care to ſet ſome bounds to your deſires after the things of this world. For whatever men

men may imagine, it is certain in experience, that it is not the abundance of outward things which makes the life of man happy. Wealth and content do not alway dwell together; nay so far from that, that perhaps they very seldom meet. SERM. XC.

And the parable likewise which follows upon this caution, doth sufficiently shew this to be our SAVIOUR's meaning; for he illustrates what he was speaking of, by a rich man whose desire of wealth was never satisfied, but he was continually increasing his estate, and enlarging his barns, to make more room still for his fruits, that he might "lay up goods in store "for many years." The parable does not so much as intimate any indirect or unjust ways of gain, which this man used to increase his estate; but condemns his insatiable desire and thirst after more; so that even this alone is covetousness, and a great fault, tho' it were attended with no other; because it is unreasonable, and without end.

II. There is covetousness likewise in getting an estate; and the vice or evil of this kind of covetousness consists chiefly in these three things.

1. In the use of unlawful and unjust ways to get or increase an estate. He is a covetous man, who by the greediness of gain, is tempted to do any unjust action, whether it be in the way of fraud and deceit, or of violence and oppression. And this perhaps is that which is most frequently in scripture called covetousness. [And this I take to be the meaning of the tenth commandment, "thou shalt not covet;" wherein is forbidden all unjust desire of that which is another man's, and all unjust endeavours and attempts to deprive him of it. For so our SAVIOUR renders it, Mark x. 19. where

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where he says to the young man that came to be directed by him, "what good thing he should do that "he might inherit eternal life; thou knowest the com- "mandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, "do not steal, do not bear false witness;" and then instead of the tenth commandment, "thou shalt not "covet," or rather by way of explication of it, he adds "μὴ ἀποστερήσῃς, defraud not;" as if he had said in a word, be not injurious to thy neighbour in any kind, in desiring or endeavouring to deprive him of any thing that is his. As the Romans in their laws were wont to comprehend those crimes which had no proper name, by the general name of *stellionatus* and *dolus malus*; so here in the decalogue, after that God had instanced in the chief and most common sorts of injuries which men are guilty of towards their neighbour, as "murder, adultery, theft, bearing "of false witness;" he sums up all the rest, which could not so easily be reckoned particularly in this short and general prohibition, "thou shalt not covet;" that is, thou shalt not be injurious to thy neighbour in any other kind; "in his wife, or servant, or house, "or cattle, or any thing that is his." Covetousness, or any inordinate desire of that which is our neighbour's, being commonly the root and parent of all those kinds of injuries.

And for the same reason St. Matthew, instead of the tenth commandment, puts this general precept, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self," as being the sense of it in other words; Matt. xix. 18, 19. "Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit "adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear "false witness, honour thy father and thy mother,

"and

" and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self." SERM. XC.
And this command of loving our neighbour as our selves, our SAVIOUR elsewhere tells us was the sum of the duties of the second table; and it is the same in sense with that precept of our SAVIOUR, Matt. vii. 12. " Therefore all things whatsoever ye would " that men should do unto you, do ye even so to " them." That is, as thou wouldest have no man to be injurious to thee in any thing, so be not thou to any other man in any kind. And the apostle, Rom. xiii. 8, 9, 10. shews us upon what account this general precept, " thou shall love thy neighbour as thy self," is the sum of the second table. " He that loveth " another hath fulfilled the law; for this, thou shalt " not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou " shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou " shalt not covet; and if there be any other com- " mandment, it is briefly comprehended in this say- " ing, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy " self." And then he adds in the next words, " love " worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is " the fulfilling of the law." That is, he that truly loves his neighbour, will not be injurious to him in any kind: " therefore love is the sum of the law."

The design of all this is to shew that he that is injurious to his neighbour in his estate in any kind, is properly guilty of the sin of covetousness, which is forbidden in the tenth commandment. So that all arts of fraud and oppression, whereby men endeavour to get and increase an estate by the injury of their neighbour, is a branch of the sin of covetousness.

2. The vice of covetousness in getting wealth, does likewise consist in an anxious and tormenting care

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SERM. XC.

about obtaining the things of this life. The regular and due temper of a man's mind about the things of this world, is to commit ourselves to the providence of God in the use of honest and lawful endeavours, and to refer the success of all to his good pleasure; and whatsoever is beyond this, is a branch from the evil root of covetousness. We distrust the providence of God, when after we have used our best endeavours, and begged his blessing upon them, we torment ourselves about the issue and event of things. And as this is sinful, so it is vain, and to no purpose. Diligence in our business is the way to get an estate; but no man was ever the richer for tormenting himself, because he is not so. The reason why men seek the things of this world, and take pains to get them, is to make life convenient and comfortable; and consequently he that torments himself about the getting of these things, contradicts himself in his own design, because he makes his life miserable, that he may make it comfortable.

3. The sin of covetousness in getting, consists in seeking the things of this life, with the neglect of things infinitely better, and which are of far greater and nearer concernment to us. He is a covetous man, who so minds the world, as to neglect God, and his soul; who is so busy and intent upon making provision for this life, as to take no care of the other; so concerned for a few days of his pilgrimage here, as to have no consideration and regard for his eternal abode in another world. God allows us to provide for this life, and considers the necessities which do continually press us while we are in the body: but while we are making provision for these dying bodies, he expects that

that we should remember we have immortal souls, which since they are to have an endless duration in another world, ought to be provided for with far greater care. 'Tis an inordinate desire of riches, when men so lay out all their care and industry for the obtaining of them, as if nothing else were to be regarded, as if no consideration at all were to be had of another world, and of that better part of ourselves which is to continue and live for ever. All desires and endeavours after riches, which take men off from the business of religion, and the care of their souls, which allow men neither the leisure and opportunity, nor the heart and affection to love GOD, and to serve him, are to be referred to this sin of covetousness, which is here condemned by our SAVIOUR in the text.

III. There is covetousness likewise in possessing or using an estate: and this consists chiefly in these three things.

First, when men are sordid towards themselves, and cannot find in their hearts to use and enjoy what they possess; are continually adding to their estate, without any design of enjoyment; and take infinite pains to raise a huge fortune, not that they may use it, but that they may be said to have it. This is a degree of covetousness even beyond that of the rich man in the parable after the text: for he, it seems, after he had "enlarged his barns" to his mind, and "laid up goods for many years" designed at last to have "taken his ease," and have fallen to the enjoyment of what he had gotten; "to have eat and drank, and to have been merry;" and this, tho' it proved but a foolish design in the issue, he being cut off in that very instant when he

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was come to the point of ſatisfaction and enjoyment; yet is it infinitely more reaſonable, than to take great pains to get an eſtate, with a full reſolution never to be the better for it.

Secondly, men are covetous in keeping an eſtate, when they do not uſe it charitably, when they cannot find in their hearts to ſpare any thing out of their abundance, to the relief of thoſe who are in want. Tho' a man get an eſtate without covetouſneſs, and have an heart to enjoy it, yet ſo far he is covetous, as he is uncharitable. He loves money more than he ought, who having enough to ſpare, chooſeth rather to keep it, than to do good with it, and to uſe it to one of the principal ends for which God gives an eſtate.

Thirdly, they likewiſe are covetous, who place their chief truſt and happineſs in riches, who (as the expreſſion is, Job xxxi. 24.) "make gold their hope, "and ſay to the fine gold, thou art my confidence." And this is the reaſon why covetouſneſs is ſo often in ſcripture called idolatry; becauſe the covetous man ſets up his riches in the place of God, putting his truſt and confidence in them, and ſetting his whole heart upon them, loving them as he ſhould love God only, "with all his heart, and ſoul, and "ſtrength:" and therefore mammon, which ſignifies riches, is in ſcripture repreſented as a deity, and the covetous man, as a ſervant, or worſhipper of mammon.

So that in ſcripture he is a covetous man who placeth his chief felicity in a great fortune, and will venture to loſe any thing, rather than to part with that; who will quit his religion, and violate his conſcience,

ſcience, and run the hazard of his ſoul, rather than forfeit his eſtate, or the hopes of advancing it to his mind. SERM. XC.

And this in times of trial and difficulty, is the great temptation to which the covetous man is expoſed. When a man may not only ſave himſelf, but get conſiderable advantage by departing from the truth; and in changing his religion, may have a good ſum of money to boot, or which is equal to it, a good place; this to a covetous mind is a very ſtrong temptation, and almoſt irreſiſtible. When error and deluſion can bid ſo high, and offer ſo good terms, no wonder if it gain ſome proſelytes among the covetous and ambitious part of mankind. This the apoſtle gives warning of, as a great temptation to rich men in times of ſuffering, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. "They "that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a ſnare: "for the love of money is the root of all evil; which "while ſome have luſted after, they have erred from "the faith." The young man in the goſpel is a ſad inſtance of this kind, who choſe rather to leave CHRIST, than to part with his great poſſeſſions. And ſuch a one was Demas, who forſook the apoſtles, and chriſtianity it ſelf, to cleave to this preſent world.

Thus I have done with the firſt thing I propoſed to ſpeak to, the nature of this vice, which our SAVIOUR in the text cautions men ſo earneſtly againſt; "take heed and beware of covetouſneſs." I ſhall now proceed in the ſecond place to ſhew the evil and unreaſonableneſs of this vice. But that ſhall be the ſubject of another diſcourſe.

SERMON

SERMON XCI.

The evil and unreaſonableneſs of covetouſneſs.

LUKE xii. 15.

And he ſaid unto them, take heed, and beware of covetouſneſs; for a man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth.

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The ſecond ſermon on this text.

I Have made entrance into a diſcourſe upon theſe words, in which I have told you there are three things obſervable.

Firſt, the manner of the caution which our SAVIOUR here gives, "take heed and beware."

Secondly, the matter of the caution, or the ſin which our SAVIOUR here warns his hearers againſt, "take heed and beware of covetouſneſs": and

Thirdly, the reaſon of this caution, becauſe "a "man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance of the "things which he poſſeſſeth."

In diſcourſing of the ſecond of theſe, viz. the matter of the caution, I propoſed,

1. To conſider wherein the nature of this vice of covetouſneſs does conſiſt.

2. To ſhew the evil and unreaſonableneſs of it.

The firſt of theſe I have diſpatched, and now go on to the ſecond, viz. to ſhew the great evil and unreaſonableneſs of the vice of covetouſneſs.

Now covetouſneſs will appear to be very evil and unreaſonable, upon theſe following accounts.

I. Becauſe it takes men off from religion, and the care of their ſouls.

II. Becauſe

II. Becauſe it tempts men to do many things which are inconſiſtent with religion, and directly contrary to it. SERM. XCI.

III. Becauſe it is an endleſs and inſatiable deſire.

IV. Becauſe the happineſs of human life doth not conſiſt in riches.

V. Becauſe riches do very often contribute very much to the miſery and infelicity of men.

Firſt, covetouſneſs takes men off from religion, and the care of their ſouls. The covetous man is wholly intent upon this world; and his inordinate deſire after theſe things, makes him to neglect God, and the eternal concernments of his ſoul. He employs all his time, and care, and thoughts about theſe temporal things, and his vehement love and eager purſuit of theſe things ſteals away his heart from GOD, robs him of his time, and of all opportunities for his ſoul, and diverts him from all ſerious thoughts of another world, and the life to come. And the reaſon of this is that which our SAVIOUR gives, Matt. vi. 24. "No man can ſerve two maſters; for either he will "hate the one, and love the other; or elſe he will hold "to the one, and deſpiſe the other. Ye cannot ſerve "GOD, and mammon." No man can ſerve two maſters ſo different as GOD and the world are; becauſe they will give croſs commands, and enjoin contrary things. GOD calls upon us to mind the duties of his worſhip and ſervice, to have a ſerious regard to religion, and a diligent care of our ſouls: but the cares of the world, and the importunity of buſineſs, and an eager appetite of being rich, call us off from theſe divine and ſpiritual employments, or diſturb us in them. GOD calls upon us to be charitable to thoſe that are in want, to be willing to diſtribute, and ready to commu-

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communicate to the necessities of our brethren: but our covetousness pulls us back, and hales us another way, and checks all merciful and charitable inclinations in us. God calls us to self-denial, and suffering for the sake of him, and his truth, and commands us to prefer the keeping of faith and a good conscience, to all worldly considerations whatsoever: but the world inspires us with other thoughts, and whispers to us "to save our selves, not to be righteous over "much," and rather to trust God with our souls, than men with our bodies and estates.

If we set our hearts and affections strongly upon any thing, they will partake of the object which they are conversant about; for "where our treasure is "(as our Lord hath told us) there will our hearts be "also." If a great estate be our chief end and design, if riches be our treasure and our happiness, our hearts will be found among the stuff. We cannot bestow our affections freely upon two objects. We cannot intensely love God, and the world; for no man can have two ultimate ends, two principal designs. Our riches may increase; but if we set our hearts upon them, and give them the chief place in our affections, we make them our lord and master. Whatever we make our ultimate end, we give it a sovereignty and empire over us; we put our selves under its dominion, and make our selves subject to all its commands. So that if "it bid us go, we must go; come, we must "come; do this, we must do it; because we are un-"der authority:" The world is our master, and we are its slaves. Now he that is under the rule and dominion of this master, must withdraw his obedience from God, and in many cases decline obedience to his laws.

This

This worldly covetous diſpoſition was that which made thoſe in the parable to make ſo many excuſes, when they were invited to the ſupper, Luke xiv. 18. "One had bought a farm, and he could not "come: another had bought ſo many yoke of oxen, "and therefore he deſired to be excuſed." Riches do ſo fill the covetous man's heart, and the cares of the world ſo poſſeſs his mind, that he hath no room left in his ſoul for any other gueſts: *Intus exiſtens prohibet alienum*, "that which is full already can re-"ceive no more." The covetous man's heart is taken up with ſuch things as keep out GOD and CHRIST, and better things. "If any man love the world, and "the things of it" to this degree, St. John tells us "that the love of the FATHER is not in "him." In the parable of the ſower, Mat. xiii. 7. Our SAVIOUR repreſents to us "the cares of the "world, which choke the word of GOD, by thorns "which ſprung up among the ſeed, and ſtifled the "growth of it." The cares of the world will not ſuffer the word of GOD "to take deep root in our "hearts," and to have any permanent effect upon them: and, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. GOD gives this as a reaſon why the people of Iſrael would not hearken to the words of his prophet, becauſe their hearts were upon the world. "They come unto thee (ſays GOD there to "the prophet) as the people cometh, and they ſit "before thee as my people, and they hear thy "words, but they will not do them: for with their "mouth they ſhew much love, but their heart go-"eth after their covetouſneſs." A heart that is deeply engaged in the world, will ſtand out againſt all the invitations, and promiſes, and threatnings of GOD's

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word. When the word of God invites ſuch perſons, it is like making love to thoſe who have already fix'd their hearts and affections elſewhere; the promiſes and threatnings of the goſpel ſignify but very little to ſuch men, becauſe their hearts are ſet upon worldly things, and all their affections are bent that way; all their hopes and deſires are worldly; to be rich, and abound in wealth; and all their fears are of poverty and loſs. Now ſuch a man can only be moved with the promiſes and threatnings of temporal things; for no promiſes have any effect upon us, but ſuch as are of ſome good, which we care for and value: nor are any threatnings apt to move us, but ſuch as are of ſome evil which we dread, and are afraid of. And therefore when eternal life, and the happineſs of another world, are offered to a worldly-minded man, he does not deſire it, he is not at all ſenſible of the value of it; the man's heart is full already of other hopes and deſires, and "the "full ſoul loatheth the honey-comb." Promiſe to ſuch a man the kingdom of heaven, and the pleaſures of God's preſence, and the joys of eternity, this does not ſignify to ſuch a man any good or happineſs that he is ſenſible of, or knows how to reliſh. And on the other hand, threaten him with the loſs of God, and eternal ſeparation from that fountain of happineſs, and with the unſpeakable anguiſh and torments of a long eternity; theſe things, tho' they be terrible, yet they are at a diſtance, and the covetous man is inured to ſenſe, and is only to be moved with things preſent and ſenſible; he cannot extend his fears ſo far as another world, ſo long as he finds himſelf well and at eaſe, as to the things of this preſent life.

If

If we would affect ſuch a man, we muſt offer to his conſideration ſomething that is fit to work upon him; threaten him with breaking open his houſe, and rifling his coffers, and carrying away his full bags; with queſtioning his title to his eſtate, or ſtarting a precedent mortgage, or ſomething of the like nature: theſe things indeed are dreadful and terrible to him; now you ſpeak intelligibly to him, and he underſtands what you mean: tell him of a good bargain, or an advantageous purchaſe, offer him decently a good bribe, or give him notice of a young heir that may be circumvented, and drawn in, then you ſay ſoomething to him that is worthy of his regard and attention; the man may be tempted by ſuch offers and promiſes as theſe: but diſcourſe to him with the tongue of men and angels, of the excellency of virtue and goodneſs, and of the neceſſity of it, to the obtaining of a glory and happineſs that ſhall neither have bounds nor end; "and lo! "thou art unto him as a very lovely ſong of one "that hath a pleaſant voice, and can play well up- "on an inſtrument; for he hears thy words, but "he will not do them;" as the prophet expreſſeth it, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. Such diſcourſes as theſe they look upon as fine talk, or a melodious ſound, that vaniſheth into air, but leaves no impreſſion behind it. Perhaps even theſe dull and ſtupid kind of men are affected a little for the preſent with the livelineſs of the romance, and the poetical vein of the preacher; but theſe things paſs away like a tale that is told, but have no laſting effect upon them. So effectually doth covetouſneſs, and the love of this preſent world, obſtruct all thoſe paſſages, through which the con-

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ſideration of religion and heavenly things ſhould enter into our minds.

Secondly, as covetouſneſs hinders men from religion, and takes them off from a due care of their ſouls; ſo it many times tempts and engageth men to do many things contrary to religion, and inconſiſtent with it: it is the natural ſource and fountain of a great many evils, and the parent of moſt of the worſt of vices. He that will engage deep in the world, muſt uſe much more guard and caution than moſt men do, to do it without ſin. How many temptations is the covetous man expoſed to in the getting and in the ſecuring, and in the ſpending and enjoying of a great eſtate? It is no eaſy task to reckon them up, and much more difficult to eſcape or reſiſt them; and yet each of theſe temptations brings him into the danger of a great many ſins. For,

I. In the getting of an eſtate, he is expoſed to all thoſe vices which may ſeem to be ſerviceable in this deſign. Nothing hath been the cauſe of more and greater ſins in the world, than covetouſneſs, and making haſte to be rich. It is Solomon's obſervation, Prov. xxviii. 20. "He that maketh haſte "to be rich, ſhall not be innocent." He does not ſay he cannot be innocent, but he ſpeaks as if there were all the probability in the world that he will not prove to be ſo; but being ſo much in haſte, will almoſt unavoidably fall into a great many overſights and faults. And the heathen poet makes the ſame obſervation in more words.

Inde ferè ſcelerum cauſæ, nec plura venena
Miſcuit, aut ferro graſſatur ſæpiùs ullum.

Humanæ

Humanæ mentis vitium, quam ſæva cupido
Immodici cenſûs: nam dives qui fieri vult,
Et citò vult fieri; ſed quæ reverentia legum,
Quis metus aut pudor eſt unquam properantis avari?

" This, ſays he, is the cauſe of moſt ſins: nor is " there any vice of which the mind of man is ca- " pable, that hath been guilty of more murders " and poiſonings, than a furious deſire of immode- " rate wealth; for he that will be rich, will make " haſte to be ſo: and what reverence of laws, what " fear of ſhame was ever ſeen in any man that was " in haſte to be rich?" And this is the ſenſe of what the apoſtle ſays concerning this vice of covetouſneſs, this peremptory reſolution of being rich, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, " They that will be rich, fall in- " to temptation, and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh " and hurtful luſts, which drown men in deſtruc- " tion and perdition. For the love of money is the " root of all evil." If this vice of covetouſneſs once reigns in us, if we once have fix'd our end, and ſet up this reſolution with ourſelves, that we will be rich, we ſhall then make every thing ſtoop and ſubmit to this deſign. A covetous man will make his principles and his conſcience to bend to his reſolution of being rich, and to bow to that intereſt. The eager deſire of riches makes men to purſue them in indirect and uncharitable ways, by falſhood and perjury, by undermining and over-reaching, by diſſembling and flattery, by corrupting and imbaſing of commodities, by falſe weights and meaſures, by taking fees with both hands, and making uſe of their power and wit to oppreſs and defraud their brother, by impoſing upon his ignorance and ſimplicity,

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plicity, or by making a prey of his poverty and neceſſity.

Covetouſneſs many times makes men cruel and unjuſt; nay, it makes them guilty of the worſt ſort of cruelty and oppreſſion. For (as one ſays well) the covetous man oppreſſeth his neighbour, not for any good to himſelf; for he does not enjoy what he tears and rends from others; ſo that he is of that moſt hateful kind of beaſts of prey, that kill other creatures, not to eat them, but that they may ſee them lie dead by them. Lions and wolves kill out of hunger; but the covetous man, like a ſerpent or ſcorpion, ſtings and bites others to death, not for his need, but for his pleaſure and recreation. Covetouſneſs is the parent of the moſt monſtrous ſins; becauſe it fixeth a man in a reſolution of getting an eſtate by any means. If falſeneſs and deceit, violence and oppreſſion will further this end; the earneſt deſire of the end tempts men to uſe any ſort of means whereby the end may be compaſſed; and tho' a man may have ſome averſeneſs from them at firſt, yet that wears off by degrees, and the ſtrong deſire of the end, reconciles a man at laſt to the love and liking of the means, how wicked and unwarrantable ſoever. Covetouſneſs tempted Achan to ſteal the accurſed thing, and Gehazi to lye to the prophet, and Ahab to oppreſs and murder Naboth. Nay, a ſmall ſum tempted the covetous mind of Judas to betray his maſter, and his SAVIOUR. And how do many men every day ſtrain their conſciences to get an eſtate, and hazard their own ſouls for money; nay exchange their ſouls, which are of more value than the whole world, for a very ſmall portion of it?

II. There

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II. There are likewiſe many other temptations which a covetous man is expoſed to in the keeping and ſecuring of an eſtate, when he hath got it. A covetous and worldly-minded man, when it comes to the trial, is in great danger of quitting his religion, and "making ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſcience." When his eſtate comes to be in hazard, he is very apt to fall off from the truth; 'tis an hundred to one but in theſe circumſtances, he will chooſe rather to violate his conſcience, than to forfeit his eſtate. What the devil falſly ſaid of Job, is true of the covetous man, "he does not ſerve GOD for nought." Upon theſe terms it was, that CHRIST and the young man parted; "he had great poſſeſſions;" and it troubled him to part with them. When Demas was brought to the trial, and put to it, whether he would ſtick to the profeſſion of the goſpel, or his worldly poſſeſſions, he quitted St. Paul, and declared for the world, 2 Tim. iv. 10. "Demas hath forſaken me, having loved this "preſent world." So far has his covetous humour beſotted, him as to make him prefer his preſent intereſt in theſe temporal things, before thoſe eternal rewards which the goſpel offered.

III. There are likewiſe many temptations which men are expoſed to in the enjoying and ſpending of a great eſtate. It is hard to have a great eſtate, and not to be maſtered by the love of it; nor to have our cares and thoughts, our hearts and affections ſwallowed up by of it. 'Tis no eaſy thing for a man that hath riches, not to overvalue them, and love them more than he ought; not to be puft up by them, and ſo place his truſt and confidence in them, Prov. xviii. 11. "The rich man's wealth is his ſtrong city,

"and

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" and as an high wall in his own conceit." The covetous man ſetteth up his riches in the place of GOD, and is apt " to fall down before this golden calf, " and worſhip it: to ſay to the gold, thou art my " hope, and to the fine gold, thou art my confidence: " to rejoice, becauſe his wealth is great, and becauſe " his hand hath gotten much."

Riches are a great temptation to irreligion and atheiſm. Upon this account Agur wiſely prays to GOD for a moderate eſtate, becauſe of the danger of both the extremes of riches and poverty; becauſe of the great and violent temptations which men are expoſed to in both theſe conditions, Prov. xxx. 8, 9. " Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me " with food convenient for me." Why not riches? " leſt I be full and deny thee, and ſay who is the " LORD?" And much more do riches tempt men to pride and inſolence towards others, Prov. xviii. 23. " The poor uſeth intreaties, but the rich anſwereth " roughly." Mens ſpirits are commonly blown up and bloated with their fortunes, and their pride, and ſtomach, and paſſion, do uſually increaſe in proportion to their wealth.

And many times riches tempt men to luxury and intemperance, and all manner of exceſs. Rich men have a mighty temptation to allow themſelves all manner of unlawful pleaſures; becauſe he who hath a great eſtate, is furniſhed with that to which hardly any thing can be denied. And this is not inconſiſtent with a covetous humour; for there are many times, men who are covetous in getting, for no other end and reaſon, but that they may " ſpend it upon their luſts." As covetouſneſs ſometimes ſtarves other vices, ſo ſometimes

times it ſerves them, and is made ſubordinate to a man's ambition, or luſt, or ſome other reigning vice. There is no ſuch abſolute inconſiſtency between riches and virtue, but that it is poſſible that a man that is very rich may be very good. But yet if we conſult experience, I doubt it will be found a true obſervation, that there are but very few rich men, who are not inſupportable either for their vanity or their vices; ſo that our SAVIOUR had reaſon for that ſevere queſtion, "how hard is it for a rich man to enter into "the kingdom of GOD?" and well might he upon this account pronounce the poor, (the poor in eſtate, as well as the poor in ſpirit) bleſſed, as we find he does, Luke vi. 20. "Bleſſed be ye poor, for yours is the "kingdom of GOD." They oftener enter there than the rich.

Thirdly, covetouſneſs is likewiſe evil and unreaſonable, becauſe it is an endleſs and inſatiable deſire. A covetous mind may propoſe to itſelf ſome certain bounds and limits, and a man may think that when he is arrived to ſuch an eſtate, and hath raiſed his fortune to ſuch a pitch, that he will then ſit down contented and ſatisfied, and will ſeek after no more. But he deceives himſelf in this matter; for when he hath attained to that which he propoſed to himſelf, he will be never the nearer being ſatisfied. So Solomon tells us, Eccleſ. v. 10. "He that loveth ſilver, ſhall not "be ſatisfied with ſilver; nor he that loveth abun-"dance with increaſe;" for no degree of wealth can ſatisfy a covetous mind. He may think ſo beforehand, that if he had ſo much it would be enough; but when he hath attain'd it, he will be ſtill reaching after more; for covetouſneſs is a diſeaſe of the

3.

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mind, and an unnatural thirſt, which is inflamed by that which ſhould quench it. Every deſire that is natural, is ſatisfied and at reſt, when it hath once obtained the thing it deſired. If a man be hungry, he is ſatisfied when he hath eaten; or if he be thirſty, the thirſt is allay'd and quenched when he hath drank to ſuch a proportion as nature doth require; and if he eat and drink beyond this meaſure, nature is oppreſſed, and it is a burden to him. But covetouſneſs is not the thirſt of nature, but of a diſeaſed mind. It is the thirſt of a fever, or of a dropſy; the more a man drinks, the more he deſires, and the more he is inflamed. In like manner, the more the covetous man increaſeth his eſtate; the more his deſires are enlarged and extended, and he finds continually new occaſions and new neceſſities; and every day as he grows richer, he diſcovers new wants; and a new poverty to be provided againſt, which he did not think of before, comes into his mind: *Et minùs hæc optat, qui non habet*; "and he that is without theſe things, covets them "leſs than he that hath them." So far is a covetous man's attaining to riches from giving him ſatisfaction, that he who hath ſcarce any thing at all, is many times much nearer to contentment, than he that hath got ſo much; nay ſo unreaſonable is this appetite, as to deſire more, even when the man knows not how to beſtow what he hath already. This Solomon obſerved long ſince (for the vices and humours of men are much the ſame in all ages) Eccleſ. iv. 8. "There is one alone, and there is not a ſecond; yea, "he hath neither child nor brother; yet there is no "end of all his labour, neither is his eye ſatisfied "with riches, neither ſaith he, for whom do I la-

"bour

" bour, and bereave my ſoul of good ? This alſo is " vanity, yea it is a ſore travel." And indeed what can be greater vanity and folly, than to be at certain pains and labour all the days of a man's life, and yet to be uncertain all the while, for whom it is that he drudgeth, and taketh all theſe pains.

And if this be the nature of this vice, the more it gets, ſtill to covet the more; then nothing can be more unreaſonable, than to think to gratify this appetite, becauſe at this rate, the man can never be contented, becauſe he can never have enough; nay, ſo far is it from that, that every new acceſſion to his fortune, ſets his deſires one degree farther from reſt and ſatisfaction: for a covetous mind having no bounds, it is very probable that the man's deſire will increaſe much faſter than his eſtate; and then the richer he is, he is ſtill the poorer, becauſe he is ſtill the leſs contented with his condition. However it is impoſſible that the man's deſire ſhould ever be ſatisfied; for deſire being always firſt, if the man's deſire of riches advanceth and goes forward as faſt as riches follow, then it is not poſſible for riches ever to overtake the deſire of them, no more than the hinder wheels of a coach can overtake thoſe which are before: becauſe as they were at a diſtance at firſt ſetting out, ſo let them go never ſo far, or ſo faſt, they keep the ſame diſtance ſtill.

So that it is the vaineſt thing in the world, for a man to deſign his own ſatisfaction by the perpetual increaſe of his fortune, becauſe contentment doth not ariſe from the abundance of what a man hath, but it muſt ſpring from the inward frame and temper of our minds; and the true way to it, is not to enlarge

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our eſtate, but to contract our deſires; and then it is poſſible that a man's money and his mind may meet; otherwiſe the purſuit is endleſs, and the farther a man follows contentment, it will but flee ſo much the farther from him; and when he hath attained the eſtate of a prince, and a revenue as great as that of France, or the Turkiſh empire, he ſhall be farther from being ſatisfied, than when he began the world, and had no more beforehand than would juſt pay for his next meal.

I ſhould now have proceeded to the fourth thing, whereby the unreaſonableneſs of covetouſneſs doth appear; becauſe the happineſs of human life doth not conſiſt in riches. And this is the argument which I ſhall more eſpecially inſiſt upon, becauſe it is that which our SAVIOUR uſeth here in the text, to take men off from this vice. "The life of man conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth." And this certainly is one of the beſt and moſt reaſonable conſiderations in the world, to moderate mens affections towards theſe things. Every reaſonable deſire propounds ſome end to itſelf. Now to what purpoſe ſhould any man deſire to increaſe his wealth ſo vaſtly beyond the proportion of his neceſſities and real occaſions? What benefit and advantage would it be to any man, to have a hundred times more than he knows what to do withal? But I ſhall not enlarge upon this argument at preſent, but refer it to another opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON XCII.

The evil and unreaſonableneſs of covetouſneſs.

LUKE xii. 15.

And he ſaid unto them, take heed, and beware of covetouſneſs; for a man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth.

SERM. XCII. The third ſermon on this text.

AFTER I had, in my firſt diſcourſe upon this ſubject, given you an account of the nature of the vice of covetouſneſs, I proceeded in the next place to repreſent the great evil and unreaſonableneſs of it.

Firſt, becauſe it takes men off from religion, and the care of their ſouls.

Secondly, becauſe it tempts men to many things which are inconſiſtent with religion, and directly contrary to it.

Thirdly, becauſe it is an endleſs and inſatiable deſire. Thus far I have gone; I proceed to the

Fourth thing, whereby the unreaſonableneſs of covetouſneſs will yet further appear. Namely, becauſe the happineſs of humane life doth not conſiſt in riches, and abundance. And this I ſhall inſiſt upon ſomewhat the more largely, becauſe it is the argument which our SAVIOUR makes uſe of here in the text, to take men off from this ſin. "The life of man conſiſteth not "in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth.

"there-

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"therefore take heed, and beware of covetousness." And this certainly is one of the best and most reasonable considerations in the world, to moderate our affections towards these things. For every reasonable desire propounds some end to it self. Now to what purpose should any man desire to increase his wealth so vastly, and beyond the proportion of his necessities and real occasions? what benefit and advantage could it be to any man, to have an hundred, or perhaps a thousand times more than he knows what to do withal.

And as for the other world, no man ever pretended that the heaping up riches here, would be useful to him there; "riches will not deliver him in the "day of wrath." No man was ever so senseless, as to imagine that he could take his estate along with him into the other world; or if he could, that heaven was to be bought with money; or that a great estate, or a great many lordships would recommend him to the favour of God. 'Tis true indeed, a man may so use riches in this world, as thereby to promote and further his happiness in the next. But then it is likewise as true, that a man may so demean himself in a poor and low condition, as thereby to render himself as acceptable to God, and capable of as great a reward, as the richest man can do. The poor woman's two mites, chearfully given to pious and charitable uses, will go as far in the other world, and find as great a reward there, as the rich man's thousands of gold and silver. And a man may be as truly generous and charitable out of a little, as out of the greatest fortune. Besides that the poor man's contentedness in a mean condition, is more admirable in it self, and more valuable with God, than for a rich man to be so.

So

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So that the great uſe of riches reſpects this world, and the beſt uſe of them is in ways of charity; and the poor man's charity, tho' it cannot be of ſo great an extent in the effects of it, yet in the degree of its virtue and merit it may be equal to it.

Now the two great deſigns of men, in regard to this world, are theſe.

1. To maintain and ſupport our lives as long as we can.

2. To make our lives as truly happy and comfortable as we can.

To the firſt of theſe ends, namely, the ſupport of our lives, a very little will ſuffice; and 'tis not much that is neceſſary to the other, to render our lives as truly comfortable as this world can make them; ſo that a vaſt eſtate is not neceſſary to either of theſe ends; for a man may live by having what is neceſſary, and may live comfortably by having that which is convenient.

No man lives the longer by having abundance; it is many times an occaſion of ſhortning a man's life, by miniſtring to exceſs and intemperance; but ſeldom of prolonging it. And ſetting aſide the vain fancy and conceit of men, no man lives the more happily, for having more than he hath real uſe and occaſion for.

Theſe two heads I ſhall at preſent ſpeak to, to make out the full force of this reaſon, which our SAVIOUR here uſeth; namely, "that a man's life conſiſteth not "in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth."

I. That riches do not contribute to the ſupport of our lives; nor

II. To the happineſs and comfort of them. That

is,

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is, they are not necessary to either of these ends. For by riches I mean, whatever is beyond a sufficient competency of those things, which are requisite to the real uses and occasions of humane life.

First, riches and abundance do not contribute to the support of our lives. And this our SAVIOUR very well represents to us in the parable immediately after the text, of the rich man, who was continually increasing his estate, so that "he had goods laid up for "many years;" but he lived not one jot the longer, for being provided of the conveniencies of life for so long a time beforehand; for whilst he was blessing himself, as if he had secured his happiness sufficiently for this World, he was uncertain of his continuance in it; GOD having decreed to take him out of this world, at that very time when he had determin'd to enter upon the enjoyment of those things, which he had been so long laying up. GOD says to him, "thou "fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; "and then whose shall those things be which thou "hast provided?" that is, what good then will all these things do thee, when thou hast no further use of and occasion for them? so that if he had been the poorest man in the world, and had not been provided for the next meal, he might have lived as long as he did with all his stores. You see that in this sense, "a "man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the "things which he possesseth." For notwithstanding all his great barns, and the abundance of fruits he had stowed in them, he did not live one jot the longer, than the poorest man might have done.

Secondly, nor do riches contribute to the happiness and comfort of our lives. Happiness is not to be bought

bought and purchas'd together with great lordſhips; it depends upon a great many cauſes, among which a competency of the things of this world is one; but riches and abundance is none of them. The happineſs of this world conſiſts in theſe two things. SERM. XCII.

1. In the enjoyment of good. And,
2. In a ſtate of freedom from evil.

Now riches do not neceſſarily make a man happy in either of theſe reſpects.

Firſt, for the enjoyment of good, a competent eſtate ſuitable to the condition and ſtation in which God hath ſet us in this world, will give a man whatever nature and reaſon can deſire; and abundance cannot make a man happier. If a man had an hundred times more than he needed, he could but enjoy it according to the capacity of a man; for if he conſulted his own happineſs, and would truly enjoy what he hath, he muſt eat and drink within the bounds of temperance and health, and muſt wear no more clothes than are for his convenience. 'Tis true, he hath wherewithal to put on a new ſuit every day; which is to be uneaſy all the days of his life; and may drink, if he pleaſes, every time out of a new cup; which would be a vain expence, and a great trouble to his ſervants, without any manner of convenience to himſelf.

But then if riches fall into the covetous man's hands, they can be no happineſs to him, becauſe he hath no heart to enjoy them. He hath indeed the eſtate of a rich man, but he wants the comfort of it, becauſe he hath the mind of a poor man; and enjoyment is all the felicity that is in a great fortune; what we enjoy is ours, but what we lay up, is from that

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time not ours, but some body's else. He that heaps up riches, and enjoys them not, is rich only for his heir, but a beggar for himself.

We are apt to pity poor men, and too apt to despise them; but surely no man's condition is more to be deplored than his, who starves himself in the midst of plenty, and being surrounded with the blessings of GOD, turns them into the greatest curse; for it is a much greater curse, not to use an estate when one has it, than not to have it. It is like a plentiful table without an appetite.

But it may be it is a great happiness to have a great estate, tho' a man never use it; the pleasure of seeing it, and telling it over, may be like the removing of billets, which may warm a man as much as if he had spent and consumed them. But this is real, and the other only imaginary. I doubt not, many covetous men take a great deal of pleasure in ruminating upon their wealth, and in re-counting what they have; but they have a great deal of tormenting care and fear about it; and if they had not, it is very hard to understand where the reasonable pleasure and happiness lies of having things to no end. It is at the best, like that of some foolish birds, which, they say, take pleasure in stealing money, that they may hide it; as if it were worth the while, for men to take pains to dig silver out of the earth, for no other purpose, but to melt it down and stamp it, and bury it there again.

But many necessities may happen, which we cannot foresee, and it is good to provide against them. There is nothing so bad, but something may be said in excuse of it; and I do not deny, but that a provident care against the common accidents of humane life is very commendable; but it is unreasonable to think

think of providing against all possibilities, which it is impossible either to foresee, or prevent. 'Tis very possible, that after a man hath gotten the greatest estate imaginable, he may lose it all by some fatal accident; and then to what purpose was all this provision made, when that which was so long a time a getting and laying up, is lost at once?

Besides, that it is not easy to conceive what necessity can happen to a covetous man, to give him an occasion of using his estate; he cannot find in his heart to bestow it upon himself in such things as are convenient, nay, almost necessary for the support of his life; for no man can feed his servants more penuriously than he does himself; all the religion he values himself upon, is a strict observance of the Iessian diet, which he recommends to those few that can deny themselves to dine with him, in hopes to make better meals upon his estate when he is gone. And if he be so penurious to himself, the necessities of others are not like to move him to be liberal. I can but imagine one occasion that could tempt such a man to lay out what he hath; namely, when one part of his estate is in danger, to spend the other to secure it. And yet even in that case, if his cause were not very clear and good, he would go nigh to lose it, using it as he does himself; that is by starving it. And if this be all, then a man had as good be without an estate, and save himself the trouble either of getting it, or securing it; for if it were all gone, he might live as well as he does, and that with half the care and pains.

Secondly, the happiness of this world consists in a state of freedom from evil. Now the great evils that men are liable to in this world, are such as are incident

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to them, either in the courſe of their lives, or at the time of their death; and riches do not contribute to mens happineſs, by freeing them from either of theſe: I ſhall ſpeak to theſe ſeverally.

I. Not from the evils which are incident to men in the courſe of their lives. Theſe are of two kinds, inward, or outward.

1. Inward evils, by which I mean thoſe of the mind; and our greateſt troubles are from within, from the anxiety of our minds and the guilt of our conſciences, from the vicious inclinations of our wills, and the irregularity and diſorders of our paſſions. Now riches were an admirable thing indeed, and worth our coveting, if they would help to cure theſe diſtempers of our minds; but they are the leaſt fitted for ſuch a purpoſe of any thing in the world; for not he that hath the greateſt eſtate, but he that hath the feweſt and moſt reaſonable deſires, and the beſt governed paſſions, and the moſt virtuous inclinations, is the happieſt man, and dwells neareſt to ſatisfaction. *Nemo malus felix*, "no bad man can be happy," tho' he were poſſeſt of the whole world; becauſe he hath that within him, which frets and diſcontents him, which galls his ſpirit, and keeps his mind reſtleſs and uneaſy; and he that does not enjoy himſelf, can enjoy nothing elſe.

Did but men know how much happineſs hath been enjoyed by many a pious and virtuous man in a mean fortune, how quiet and eaſy their minds have been, how much fuller of joy and pleaſure, than the heart of any covetous worldling ever was in his moſt proſperous eſtate, and when "his corn and wine and oil "abounded;" did we (I ſay) but know this, we ſhould

should not envy the men of mighty fortunes. *Nam neque divitibus contingunt gaudia solis.* "Rich men are "not the only happy people in the world." If they be not good as well as rich, happiness is a greater stranger to their dwellings, than to the cottages of poorer men.

Now riches are so far from helping to make men good, that they are one of the greatest temptations to them in the world to be otherwise; which is the reason why our SAVIOUR says, "it is so very hard for "a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven;" because considering the powerful, and almost irresistible temptations of a great estate, and the impotency and weakness of human nature to govern itself in a plentiful fortune, it is very hard for a rich man to be so good as he ought, it requires a great force and firmness of resolution, a very solid and vigorous constitution of mind, to bear a great fortune, and not to be corrupted by it; and a man hath never more reason to implore GOD's gracious help and assistance, and to consult his own best and coolest thoughts, to know what he ought to do, and how he ought to demean himself, than when the outward blessings of this life flow in amain upon him; *felicitate corrumpimur*, "nothing sooner debaucheth men than prosperity;" and he is a very happy man, whom wealth and a good fortune do not make licentious and dissolute; because these tempt men with the power and opportunity to do all the ill that their wicked hearts can design, or desire.

The temptation of riches, and the power that goes along with them, is so forcible and prevalent, that the devil, who is a sagacious spirit, and hath great and long experience in this kind, when he was making the experiment, whether CHRIST was a mere man, or the SON of GOD, reserved this for his last temptation resolving,

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resolving, if that would not do, to try him no farther. After he had assaulted him in several kinds, he represents to him at last, that which was sufficient to have surfeited two of the most insatiable desires of human nature, ambition and covetousness, even "all "the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, "in a moment," or point of time; he brings all the rays of his glory to one point, that the temptation might kindle and take hold the sooner; and says to him, "all this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down "and worship me." He supposed with great probability, that if he were but a mere man, the strongest and most resolved mind would bend and yield to so dazzling a temptation as this; but when he saw that this temptation was rejected, he found himself baffled, and gave him over; since this did not move him, he concluded now, that he was the SON of GOD indeed, and that it was in vain to tempt him any farther.

From all this it appears, that riches are so far from making men virtuous, that nothing is more dangerous to virtue, than a full condition; if men have not a great degree of grace, as well as discretion to manage it. Solomon tells us, "that the prosperity of fools distroy-"eth them."

And yet how do most of us court this temptation, and are forward to thrust and venture ourselves upon it? There are a great many other things, in which most men make a right judgment of themselves, and will readily acknowledge that they are altogether unfit for them. Every man will not take upon him to be a physician, or a lawyer, to prescribe medicines in dangerous cases, and to give counsel to men in knotty and difficult points about their estates; but every man thinks himself fit enough to be rich, and sufficiently qualified to manage

manage a great eſtate, if he can but get it; when perhaps there are few things in the world, which men are more inſufficient for, than to wield and govern a great fortune, nor wherein there is greater danger of miſcarriage. It is not every body's talent to be wealthy and wiſe, rich and innocent.

2. As for the outward evils of this life, ſuch as want and contempt, bodily pains and diſeaſes, unhappineſs in friends and relations, a great eſtate is by no means a ſufficient ſecurity or remedy to a covetous man againſt theſe.

(1.) As for want. And ſurely one would think, that if riches were good for any thing, they are a very proper remedy againſt this evil, and a moſt certain and infallible cure of it; but experience tells us quite otherwiſe. Socrates was wont to ſay, that, "To "want nothing, is the privilege of the deity, and pro- "per to GOD alone; but to ſtand in need of as few "things as may be, is the privilege of a wiſe and "good man, and a ſtate of happineſs next to that of "GOD himſelf; becauſe he that hath the feweſt wants "is the moſt eaſily ſupplied, and is next to him that "is ſelf-ſufficient." Now a man of moderate deſires hath infinitely fewer wants than a covetous man; and becauſe his deſires are moderate, a moderate eſtate will ſatisfy them: but the wants of a covetous mind are never to be ſupply'd, becauſe it hath order'd the matter ſo cunningly, as to want even that which it hath; ſuch a man does not get riches to ſupply his wants, but is content to want that he may be rich; inſomuch that he hath not the heart to uſe his eſtate for the ſupply of his real neceſſities. How many do almoſt ſtarve themſelves in the midſt of plenty and abundance? There is no greater ſign of poverty, than

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to be deeply in debt; now the covetous man lives and dies in debt to himſelf. Some men have been ſo ſhamefully penurious and ſtingy to themſelves, as even to die to ſave charges, which yet perhaps is the moſt generous thing they ever did in their whole lives, in reſpect to the world; becauſe by this means ſome body may come to the enjoyment of their eſtates, and that great dunghil which they have been ſo long in raking together, may by this means come to be ſpread abroad for the publick benefit.

So that if a covetous man were poſſeſſed of the wealth of both the Indies, all this would not free him from want. A poor man's wants may be ſatisfied, when he hath obtained what he wants: but the covetous man labours of an incurable want; becauſe he wants that which he hath, as well as that which he hath not.

(2.) As for contempt, riches will not ſecure a covetous man againſt this neither; nay, ſo far is it from that, that he is commonly the more ridiculous and deſpiſed for living poor in the midſt of abundance, than if he were really ſo. Did I ſay really ſo? He is the moſt really poor of all other men. For as one ſays well, "the rich poor man is emphatically poor."

(3.) Neither will riches free men from bodily illneſs and pain. The rich are liable to as many diſeaſes, and as ſharp pains as the poor, and they have commonly leſs patience to bear them than the poor; becauſe they have not been inured to other ſorts of evils. They that have been accuſtomed to labour, are generally beſt fitted to bear pain; the rich are commonly more tender and delicate, and have a quicker ſenſe of pain, more matter, and greater quantity

tity of humours to feed a diſeaſe, and to inflame it to a greater height. SERM. XCII.

I muſt not here forget that there is a ſort of rich men, I mean the penurious miſers, who ſtarve themſelves more than the poor, and fare many times more hardly; and for this reaſon, tho' they be not in danger of the diſeaſes that come from intemperance, and a plentiful table; yet they are liable to the diſeaſes which proceed from ſtarving and emptineſs; which the phyſicians ſay are more dangerous than the other: ſo that neither the prodigal nor the niggardly rich man is ſecured from bodily pains and diſeaſes, by a great eſtate.

(4.) Neither will riches ſecure a man from being unhappy in his friends and relations. A great eſtate will not make a man's children either more dutiful or wiſe, than the children of meaner perſons; and if they be not ſo, his eſtate cannot be ſo great an happineſs to him, as they may prove an affliction. Solomon tells us, that the very fear and apprehenſion of this did very much imbitter the fruit of all his labour; and he ſeems to ſpeak it ſenſibly, and very probably with a melancholy reflexion upon his ſon Rehoboam, Eccleſ. ii. 18, 19. "Yea, I hated "all my labour which I had taken under the ſun, "becauſe I ſhould leave it unto the man that ſhall be "after me; and who knows whether he ſhall be a "wiſe man, or a fool? yet ſhall he have rule over "all my labour, wherein I have laboured, and "wherein I have ſhewed my ſelf wiſe under the "ſun." Who knows whether he ſhall be a wiſe man, or a fool? He ſeems to ſpeak doubtfully: but he had a very ſhrewd gueſs what kind of man his

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ſon would make; for he ſpeaks more deſpondingly in the next words, (ver. 20, 21.) "therefore I went "about to cauſe my heart to deſpair of all the la- "bour which I took under the ſun;" that is, when I thought ſeriouſly of it, I began to think that all the pains I had taken to get an eſtate, would be but to little purpoſe; "for there is a man (ſaith he) "whoſe labour is in wiſdom, and in knowledge, "and in equity," (that is, who by wiſe and honeſt means hath rais'd a great eſtate) "yet to a man "that hath not laboured therein" (that is, to a man who is endowed with none of theſe qualities) "ſhall he leave it for his portion; this alſo is vanity, "and a great evil."

And as for friends, tho' the rich man have many that will call themſelves ſo, yet he had almoſt as good have none; for he can hardly ever know whether they be ſo or not, unleſs he chance to fall into poverty, and then indeed the change of his condition may give him that advantage and opportunity, which otherwiſe he is never like to have of diſcerning between his friends and his flatterers. Thus you ſee that riches are no ſecurity againſt the moſt conſiderable evils which attend us in the courſe of our lives.

II. When we come to die, nothing will miniſter leſs comfort to us at that time, than a great eſtate. It is then a very ſmall pleaſure to a man, to reflect how much he hath gotten in the world, when he ſees that he muſt leave it; nay, like the young man in the goſpel, he goes away ſo much the more "ſorrowful, becauſe he had great poſſeſſions." All the things of this world ſeem very inconſidera-

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ble to a man, when he approaches to the confines of the other: for when he sees that he must leave this world, then he would fain make a virtue of necessity, and begins to change his apprehensions of these things, and to have very slight and mean thoughts of them, when he is convinc'd he can enjoy them no longer. What the philosopher was wont to say of the pleasures of this world, is as true of riches, and all the other enjoyments of it; that "if "they did but put on the same countenance, and "look with the same face, when they come to us, that "they will do, when they turn from us, and take "their leave of us, we should hardly entertain "them." SERM. XCII.

Now if a man have placed his chief happiness in this world, as the covetous man does in his riches, his great trouble, when he comes to die, will be, that he must leave them. Nothing could be more severely said to the covetous man, than that which God says to the rich man in the parable; "thou "fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, "and then whose shall these things be?" For of all things in the world, such men cannot endure to think of parting with these things, or that what they have got with such great care and labour, should come to the possession of another.

And therefore when we are so hot and eager in the pursuit of these things, we should do well to consider, how they will appear to us in a dying hour. And this consideration well imprinted upon our minds, will make us very careful, to treasure up other kind of comforts to our selves against such a time, and to labour after those things which we

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ſhall never grow out of conceit withal, but ſhall value them to the laſt, and then moſt of all when we come to die, and leave this world. For as a poet of our own ſays excellently.

" 'Tis not that which firſt we love:
" But what dying we approve."

Thus I have done with the fourth thing, whereby the evil and unreaſonableneſs of covetouſneſs doth appear; namely, that the happineſs of humane life doth not conſiſt in a great eſtate; " the life of man " doth not conſiſt in the abundance of the things " which he poſſeſſeth." The great ends of religion, and covetouſneſs, are very different. The great end which religion propoſeth to it ſelf, is happineſs: but the great end which covetouſneſs propoſeth is riches; which are neither a neceſſary nor a probable means of happineſs. I ſhould now have proceeded to the fifth and laſt particular; namely, that riches are ſo far from being the happineſs of humane life, that they uſually contribute very much to our miſery and ſorrow; as will appear, if we conſider theſe four things.

Firſt, the labour and care which covetous men are at in the getting of a great eſtate.

Secondly, the anxiety of keeping it, together with the fears of loſing it.

Thirdly, the trouble and vexation of having loſt it; and,

Fourthly, the dreadful and heavy account which every man muſt give of a great eſtate. But theſe particulars, together with the application of this whole diſcourſe, I ſhall refer to another opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON XCIII.

The evil and unreaſonableneſs of covetouſneſs.

LUKE xii. 15.

And he ſaid unto them, take heed, and beware of covetouſneſs; for a man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth.

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The fourth ſermon on this text.

IN my two laſt diſcourſes on this ſubject, I have repreſented the evil and unreaſonableneſs of the vice of covetouſneſs in four particulars. I proceed now to the fifth and laſt particular, whereby I told you the evil and unreaſonableneſs of it would appear, viz.

That riches are ſo far from being the happineſs of humane life, that they uſually contribute very much to our miſery and ſorrow; as will evidently appear, if we conſider theſe four things.

Firſt, the labour and care which the covetous man is at in getting of a great eſtate.

Secondly, the anxiety of keeping it, together with the fears of loſing it.

Thirdly, the trouble and vexation of having loſt it.

Fourthly, the heavy and dreadful account which every man muſt give of a great eſtate.

Firſt, the labour and care which the covetous man hath in getting a great eſtate. He, that will be rich, muſt ſweat for it, and refuſe no pains and trouble; he muſt "riſe up early, and lie down late, and eat the bread

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" bread of carefulneſs." A ſlave that digs in the mines, or rows in the gallies, is not a greater drudge than ſome covetous worldlings are; only with this difference, that the covetous man thinks that he labours and takes all theſe pains for himſelf; whereas the ſlave underſtands the matter more truly, and thinks that he does it for another.

But beſides the pains he takes, he is full of care and anxiety. How is he, through the greedy deſire of having, racked between the hopes of getting, and the fear of miſſing what he ſeeks? the apoſtle obſerves what tormenting cares accompany this vice: 1 Tim. vi. 10. " The love of money (ſaith he) is the root of all evil;" not only of the evil of ſin, but of the evil likewiſe of trouble and diſquiet. For it follows, " which while " ſome coveted after, they have pierced themſelves " through with many ſorrows: variety of troubles at- " tend them that will be rich."

Secondly, if we conſider the anxiety of keeping what they have got, together with the fear of loſing it again, this is another great part of a covetous man's infelicity. The rich man here in the parable after the text, when he ſaw his eſtate coming upon him ſo faſt, cries out, " what ſhall I do"? poor man! who would not pity his condition, to ſee him put to this difficulty and diſtreſs, and to hear him make as heavy a moan as the pooreſt man could do! now that he hath a plentiful harveſt, and his crop hath anſwered, if it were poſſible, his covetous deſire, he is in a great deal of perplexity, and almoſt at his wits end how to diſpoſe of it; he was horribly afraid leſt any of it ſhould be loſt for want of a ſecure place to ſtore it up in. " What ſhall I do, becauſe I have no room,

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"where to bestow my fruits"? where was the difficulty of this? why, he was loth to lay out money to secure them. But upon farther consideration, he resolves of the two evils, to choose the least; and he said, "this will I do, I will pull down my barns, "and build greater, and there will I bestow all my "fruits, and my goods." But why could he not let the barns he had stand, and build more? no, that he did not think so well, he loved to see all his good things at one view, and what a goodly show they would make together. Besides that it is the humour of covetousness, when it breaks out into expence, to over-do; the miser's buildings are like his feasts, always extravagant. The covetous man (as to the business of expence) is like a coward as to fighting, he declines it as long as he can; but when he is push'd to the last necessity, he grows desperate, and lays about him.

Tantis parta malis, curâ majore metuque
Servantur, misera est magni custodia censûs.

"Riches which are got with so much trouble, are "not kept without greater fear and care. A cove- "tous man is nothing more miserable, than in the "anxiety and care of disposing and securing what he "hath got." When a man's desires are endless, his cares and fears will be so too.

Thirdly, as great an evil as any of the former, is the vexation of having lost these things. If by any accident the man happens to be deprived of them, then he takes on heavily, hangs down his head, and mourns, "as a man would do for his first-born;" and is ready to cry out with Micah, "they have taken "away my gods, and what have I more?" upon every little loss the covetous man is undone, tho' he have

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have a hundred times more left than he knows what to do withal. So deeply are the hearts of earthly-minded men many times pierced with earthly losses, as with Rachel to refuse to be comforted. Nay, St. Paul observes, "that the sorrow of the world some-"times worketh death," 1 Cor. vii. 10.

Fourthly, but the saddest consideration of all is, that heavy and dreadful account that must one day be given, both of the getting and using of a great estate. They that have got an estate by fraud and falshood, or by oppression and grinding the face of the poor, may read their doom at large, James v. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and "howl for your miseries that shall come upon you; "your riches are corrupted, and your garments are "moth-eaten; your gold and silver is canker'd, and "the rust of them shall be a witness against you, "and shall eat your flesh as it were fire: ye have "heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, "the hire of the labourers, which have reaped down "your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, "crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped, "are entred into the ears of the LORD of Sabaoth; "ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been "wanton, ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day "of slaughter."

And we must be accountable likewise for the using of our estates. GOD gives them to us in trust, and the greater they are, the more we are to account for; so much as we need is ours, but beyond what will support us, and be a convenient provision for our families, in the rank GOD hath placed them; all that is given to us, that we may give it to others, and indeed

indeed it is not ours; we are the proprietors of it in reſpect of men, but in reſpect of GOD we are but truſtees, and ſtewards, and GOD will require an account of us how we have diſpoſed of it.

And can there be a more reigning madneſs among men, than to take care only to increaſe their account more and more, by receiving much; whereas our great care and concernment ſhould be to clear our account, by laying out what we receive, according to the truſt repoſed in us? how much we ſhall receive of the things of this world, is in the care and will of our maſter; but our care and fidelity are ſeen in laying it out as we ought. Among men (ſays one) it is well enough, if a ſteward can give an account of ſo much laid out, and ſo much in caſh, and upon this he ſhall have his diſcharge: but we cannot this way clear our account with GOD; for it is not offering him his own again that will ſatisfy him, as we may learn from the parable of the talents. So that upon the whole matter, we ſhould be ſo far from envying the rich, that we ſhould rather envy the ſafety and happineſs of thoſe who are not intruſted with ſuch dangerous bleſſings, and who are free from the temptations of a plentiful fortune, and the curſe of a covetous mind, and from the heavy account of a great eſtate.

I come now, in the laſt place, to make ſome application of this diſcourſe to our ſelves.

I. Let our SAVIOUR's caution take place with us, let theſe words of his ſink into our minds, "take "heed and beware of covetouſneſs." Our SAVIOUR, I told you, doubles the caution, that we may double our care. It is a ſin very apt to ſteal upon us, and

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silly to insinuate it self into us under the specious pretence of industry in our callings, and a provident care of our families: but however it may be coloured over, it is a great evil, dangerous to our selves, and mischievous to the world. Now to kill this vice in us, besides the considerations before-mentioned taken from the evil and unreasonableness of it, I will urge these three more.

1. That the things of this world are uncertain.

2. That our lives are as uncertain as these things: and,

3. That there is another life after this.

1. The uncertainty of the things of this world. This should very much cool our affections toward them, that after all our care and diligence for the obtaining of them, we are not sure to enjoy them; we may be deprived of them by a thousand accidents. This consideration Solomon urgeth, to take men off from an over-eager pursuit of these things, Prov. xxiii. 5. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which "is not? for riches certainly make to themselves "wings, they fly away as an eagle towards heaven." After we have sat brooding over an estate many years, it may all on a sudden, before we are aware, take wing, and fly away, like an eagle towards heaven, soaring suddenly out of our sight, and never to return again.

And the same argument St. Paul useth, to take off mens affections from the world, 1 Cor. vii. 31. because, "the fashion of this world passeth away; "παράγει τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου." He compares the things of this world to a scene, which is presently changed, and vanisheth almost as soon as it appears.

Now

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Now ſeeing theſe things are ſo uncertain, we ſhould take heed how we fix our hearts too much upon them; we ſhould not make love to any thing that is ſo fickle and inconſtant as this world is. We ſhould be afraid to contract too near and intimate a friendſhip with any thing which will forſake us, after we have courted it with ſo much importunity, and purchas'd it with ſo much pains, and endeavour'd to ſecure it with ſo much caution and tenderneſs.

2. Our lives are as uncertain as theſe things. If our eſtates remain with us, we are continually in danger of being removed from them. And (as one ſays) it is folly to build our hopes upon a match, where both parties are ſo uncertain and inconſtant. Why ſhould we place our deareſt affections upon things which we are not ſure to enjoy one moment? "thou fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul be taken from "thee, and then whoſe ſhall thoſe things be?" I remember Seneca tells us a real ſtory, juſt anſwerable to the rich man in the parable, of an acquaintance of his, who by long and great induſtry had arrived to a vaſt eſtate; and juſt when he began to enjoy it, after one of the firſt good meals which perhaps he ever made in his life, that very night his ſoul was taken from him, for preſently after ſupper he died. *In ipſo actu bene ſedentium rerum, in ipſo procurrentis fortunæ impetu.* "In the height of his proſperity, and in the "full career of his good fortune."

But if we live to enjoy for any time what we have got, we ſhould remember that our life is but a paſſage through the world, and that we are but "pilgrims and ſtrangers in the world, as all our fa"thers were, that we have here no abiding-place,

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" no continuing city," but are travelling towards our own country. And why ſhould we load our ſelves whilſt we are upon our journey, and cumber our ſelves with thoſe things which will be of no uſe to us there, where we are going?

But the great wonder of all is, that this vice ſhould ſo ſtrongly reign, and even grow upon men in old age, and get ſtrength, as weakneſs creeps upon us. This very thought, " that we are to die," ſhould work in us a great indifferency towards the things of this world. But when men are convinc'd they cannot live long, and that every ſtep they take, they are in danger of ſtumbling into the grave, this one would think ſhould wean our affections from this world; and yet uſually none take ſo faſt hold of it, and embrace it ſo kindly as old men; like friends, who tho' they know they muſt leave one another, yet are loth to part. Do we not ſee many purſue theſe things with as much eagerneſs and appetite, when they are leaving the world, as if they were to ſtay in it an hundred years longer? So that in this ſenſe alſo, they are children again, and are as fond of theſe toys, as if they were juſt beginning the world, and ſetting out for their whole life.

3. There is another life after this, to be ſeriouſly thought on, and provided for with great care: and did men firmly believe this, they would not with Martha, " buſy themſelves about many things, but would " mind the one thing neceſſary, and with Mary " chooſe that better part which could not be taken " from them." They would overlook the trifles of this world, and ſcarce take notice of " the things " which are ſeen," but be only intent upon " the

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" things which are not ſeen; becauſe the things " which are ſeen are but temporal, but the things " which are not ſeen are eternal." The great concernments of another world would employ their utmoſt care, and their beſt thoughts. SERM. XCIII.

Whilſt we are in this world, we ſhould remember " that this is not our home, nor the place " of our reſt;" and therefore as men do in an inn, we ſhould make a ſhift with thoſe indifferent accommodations which the world will afford us, and which we can have upon eaſy terms, without too much trouble and ſtir, becauſe we are not to continue long here; and in the mean time we ſhould cheer up our ſelves with the thoughts of the pleaſure and the plenty of our FATHER's houſe, and of that full contentment and ſatisfaction which we ſhall meet withal, when we come to thoſe everlaſting habitations.

So that our great care ſhould be to provide for eternity. If we have unbounded deſires, let us place them upon ſuch objects as are worthy of them. Let us " earneſtly covet the beſt things," and ſeek after the true riches. We ſhould ſo mind the world, as to make heaven our great care; as to make ſure to " provide our ſelves bags that wax not old, " a treaſure in the heavens, that faileth not, where " no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth," as our SAVIOUR adviſeth, Luke xii. 33. To the ſame purpoſe is the counſel of St. Paul, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19. " Charge them that are rich in this " world, that they be rich in good works, willing " to diſtribute, ready to communicate, laying up " for themſelves a good foundation, or (as the word " θεμέλιον may alſo be rendred) a good treaſure,

" againſt

SERM. XCII. "againſt the time which is to come, that they may "lay hold of eternal life."

I have told you that all theſe things will fail in a ſhort ſpace; we ſhall either be ſtripp'd of them, or ſeparated from them when we come to die, and ſhall look over to that vaſt eternity which we muſt ſhortly enter upon; this world, and all the enjoyments of it, will then be as nothing to us, and we ſhall be wholly taken up with the thoughts of another world, and be heartily ſorry that the things of this world have taken up ſo much of our time and care, and that the great and weighty concernments of all eternity have been ſo little minded and regarded by us. Now ſeeing all theſe things ſhall be, pardon me, if I earneſtly beg of you in the midſt of all your worldly cares, to have ſome conſideration for your immortal ſouls, which are in no wiſe provided for by a great eſtate, but are deſigned for nobler enjoyments than this world can afford. When you are taking care to feed and clothe theſe dying bodies, remember that better part of your ſelves which is to live for ever. Let not all your enquiry be, "what ſhall I eat? "or what ſhall I drink? or wherewithal ſhall I be "clothed?" but ſometimes ask your ſelves this queſtion, "what ſhall I do to be ſaved?" I have an immortal ſpirit, it is but fit ſome care ſhould be taken of that, to train it up to eternity, and to make it "fit to be made partaker of an inheri-"tance among them that are ſanctified."

The firm belief and ſerious conſideration of the great things of another world cannot ſurely but cool the heat of our affections towards theſe dying and periſhing thing, and make us reſolved not to do

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any thing whereby we may violate the peace of our consciences, or forfeit our interest and happiness in another world. SERM. XCIII.

II. By way of remedy against this vice of covetousness, it is good for men to be contented with their condition. This the apostle prescribes as the best cure of this vice, Heb. xiii. 5. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content "with such things as you have; ἀρκούμενοι τοῖς παροῦσιν," being contented with the present, and thinking that sufficient. A covetous man cannot enjoy the present, for fear of the future; either out of fear that he shall come to want, or out of a sickness and uneasiness of mind, which makes that nothing pleaseth him: but if we could bring our minds to our condition, and be contented with what we have, we should not be so eager and impatient after more.

This contentedness with our present condition doth not hinder, but that men by providence, and industry, and lawful endeavours, may lay the foundation of a more plentiful fortune than they have at present. For provided a man use no indirect and dishonest ways to increase his estate, and do not torment himself with anxious cares, do neither make himself guilty, nor miserable, that he may be rich; provided he do not neglect better things, to attain these, and have not an insatiable appetite towards them; provided he do not idolize his estate, and set his heart upon these things; and if he can find in his heart to enjoy them himself, and to be charitable to others; nothing hinders but that he may be contented with his present condition, and yet take all fair opportunities which the providence of God puts into his hands of enlarging

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ing his fortune. It is a good character which the poet gives us of Aristippus,

Omnis Aristippum decuit color, & status & res;
Tentantem majora, ferè præsentibus æquum.

"Every state and condition became him; for tho' "he endeavoured after more, yet his mind was al- "ways in a manner equal to his present condition."

But if a man be discontented with the present, and restless because he hath no more, the whole world will not satisfy him; and if God should raise him from one step to another, he would never think his fortune high enough, and in every degree of it would be as little contented as he was at first. Our Saviour represents this sort of men by the rich man here in the parable, who when his barns were full, and ready to crack, his mind was not filled; therefore he pulls them down and builds greater; and if he had lived 'till these had been full, they must have gone down too, and he would still have built greater. So that tho' he design'd when he had raised his estate to such a pitch, to have sat down, and taken his ease, yet his covetous humour would have been stirring again, and still have stept in between him and contentment, and for ever have hindred him from arriving at it.

III. By way of direction, I would persuade those who are rich, to be charitable with what they have. If God hath blest us with abundance, and we would not be like this rich man here in the parable, we must lay out of our estates, in ways of piety and charity, for the publick good, and for the private relief of those who are in want; for that is the ἀπόδοσις, or moral of the parable; "so is he that layeth up treasures to himself, "and is not rich towards God." So shall he be; such

ſuch an iſſue of his folly may every one expect, (to be taken away from his eſtate before he comes to enjoy it) "who layeth up treaſures for himſelf, but is "not rich towards GOD;" but does not lay up riches with GOD. How is that? By works of mercy, and charity. This our SAVIOUR calls "laying up for "ourſelves treaſure in heaven;" Matt. xvi. 20. And at the 33d verſe of this chapter, he calls giving of alms, "providing for ourſelves bags which wax not "old, a treaſure in the heavens which faileth not:" they who do thus, who "are rich in good works, "ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate," are ſaid to "lay up for themſelves a good treaſure againſt "the time which is to come, that they may lay hold "on eternal life," 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. *Extra fortunam eſt quicquid donatur*; "whatſoever we give to "the poor is ſafely diſpoſed, and put out of the reach "of fortune," becauſe it is laid up in heaven, where we may expect the return and recompence of it. Charity to our poor brethren is a certain way of tranſmitting our riches into the other world, for our reception there. So our LORD tells us, Luke xvi. 9. "I ſay unto you, make to yourſelves friends "of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs, that when ye "ſhall fail (that is, when ye ſhall leave this world, "and the enjoyments of it) they may receive you "into everlaſting habitations."

At the great day of judgment, when we ſhall appear before GOD, and, according to our SAVIOUR's repreſentation of the proceedings of that day, ſhall hear him thus expoſtulating with men, "I was hun-"gry, and ye gave me no meat; thirſty, and ye gave "me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not;

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" ſick, and in priſon, and ye viſited me not;" what would we then give, how much of our eſtates, if we had them then at our command, would we not be willing to part withal, to have that comfortable ſentence paſt upon us; " come, ye bleſſed of my FATHER, " inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the " foundation of the world!" But if we be found among thoſe who would ſpare nothing out of their abundance to any charitable uſe and purpoſe, I have not the heart to tell you how miſerable the condition of ſuch perſons will be, and how dreadful a doom will be paſſed upon them.

It is a ſad conſideration, that there are ſome perſons in the world, who ſeem to be only defective in this duty; like the young man in the goſpel, who lacked but " this one thing" to make him perfect; " he had kept the commandments from his youth;" and preſerved himſelf from thoſe groſs ſins which the law did plainly forbid; and yet for want of " this " one thing" he parted from his SAVIOUR, and, for any thing we know, fell ſhort of eternal life. There are many who are very devout and religious, much in prayer and faſting, and all the other frugal exerciſes of piety, which coſt them no money; but yet are very defective in alms and charity, which in ſcripture are ſo frequently joined with the faſtings and prayers of good men; and by this means, all their devotion and diligence in the other parts of religion is loſt, and will not bring them to heaven. And is it not great pity, that they who " are not far from the king- " dom of GOD ſhould fall ſhort of it?" that they, who in moſt other things bid ſo fair for heaven, ſhould break with GOD upon this ſingle point?

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I know men have ſeveral ways to deceive their own hearts, and to defend themſelves againſt all theſe aſſaults. SERM. XCIII.

Firſt, they ſay, they are injurious to no man, in not being charitable. And 'tis true, that in human courts the poor can have no action againſt the rich for want of charity to them; but yet for all that, they do injuriouſly detain that which doth not of right belong to them. They are cruel and hard-hearted, and they are guilty of high breach of truſt, in reſpect of GOD, whoſe ſtewards they are, and who hath dealt ſo liberally with them in the things of this life, on purpoſe to oblige them to be ſo to others. That which thou ſtoreſt up, without regard to the neceſſities of others, is unlawfully detained by thee, ſince GOD intended it ſhould have been, "for bread to the hungry, and "clothes to the naked," and for help and relief "of "thoſe who are ready to periſh." For why art thou rich, and another poor? but that thou mighteſt exerciſe thy charity upon thoſe fitting objects which the providence of GOD preſents to thee. It had been eaſy for GOD (ſince "the earth is his, and the fulneſs "thereof") ſo to have contrived things, that every man ſhould have had a ſufficiency, and have been in a moderate condition; but then a great many virtues would have been ſhut out of the world, and loſt, for want of opportunity to exerciſe them. Where then had been the poor man's patience, and the rich man's pity? and the contentedneſs of men of moderate fortune?

Secondly, men ſay that they have children to provide for. And do ſo in GOD's name, for he allows us to do it liberally; but unleſs their condition and

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wealth ſet them above an ordinary calling, do not chooſe ſo to provide for them, as to take them off from all employment, leſt you put them in the ready way to be undone; have a care of leaving them no other buſineſs, but to ſpend what you have left them; if you do ſo, they will in all probability do that work very effectually, and make as much haſte to be poor, as you did to make them rich. If men could be but contented to do that which is beſt for their children, they might do a great deal better for themſelves, by diſpoſing what they have to ſpare in charity.

Thirdly, others would fain excuſe themſelves from this duty at preſent by telling what they intend to do when they come to die, that is, when they can keep what they have no longer. It ſeems then thou wilt leave it to thy executor to do good in thy ſtead. This ſhews thou haſt no great heart to the buſineſs, when thou deferreſt it as long as ever thou canſt. But why wilt thou truſt another with the diſpoſal of thy charity, rather than thyſelf? This is hardly to offer either "a reaſona-"ble, or a living ſacrifice to GOD," to do good only when we are dead. It is well that GOD hath made all men mortal, and that "it is appointed for all men once "to die;" otherwiſe ſome men would never do good at all.

Wherefore ſetting aſide theſe, and all other excuſes, which will not be admitted, nor will any of us have the face to plead them at the day of judgment; I ſay, ſetting aſide all excuſes whatſoever, let us reſolve to do good with what we have whilſt we can; and to that end let us lay aſide ſome portion of what GOD hath bleſt us withal, for the uſes of piety and charity, and let it bear ſome decent proportion to what GOD hath given us.

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There is never want of proper objects for our largest charity, and now less than ever. Besides those at home, which present themselves to us in great numbers every day, GOD hath sent us many from abroad, who call loud upon us for our pity and help, both as they are reduced to the greatest extremity, and are sufferers in the best cause, that of our common religion, which ought now to be dearer to us than ever. Let us shew mercy now, as we expect mercy from others, in any day of our distress in this world, and as ever we hope, whenever we come to appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST, "to find mercy with the LORD in that day."

Consider what I have said upon this argument, and let this extraordinary kind of caution which our SAVIOUR here gives, make a deep impression upon your minds; "take heed, and beware of covetousness; "for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of "of the things which he possesseth."

SERMON XCIV.

Religion, our first and great concernment.

MATTH. vi. 33.

But seek ye first the Kingdom of GOD, *and his Righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

IN the latter part of this chapter, our SAVIOUR doth in a long discourse caution his disciples against an inordinate care about the things of this life, which he concludes with a strict charge to make religion

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religion their first and great concernment, and above all things to take care to secure to themselves the happiness of another life; "but seek ye first the "kingdom of GOD, and his righteousness," &c. In the handling of which words, I shall do these four things.

First, I shall explain what is here meant by "the "kingdom of GOD, and his righteousness."

Secondly, What by seeking of these.

Thirdly, I shall lay down some necessary and plain directions, which if we observe, we cannot miscarry in this matter.

Fourthly, I shall set before you some of the most proper and powerful motives and encouragements to the minding of this great interest and concernment; among which, I shall particularly consider the argument or encouragement here used in the text, "and "all these things shall be added unto you."

First, I shall explain to you what is here meant by "the kingdom of GOD, and his righteousness."

I. What is meant by the kingdom of GOD. And there are two famous acceptations of this phrase, and both of them very frequent in the new testament. Sometimes it is used to signify the state of the gospel, or the christian religion, which by the Jews was called the kingdom of GOD, or the kingdom of the Messias, Mark i. 15. "The kingdom of GOD is "at hand," that is, the state or dispensation of the gospel is now approaching, and ready to take place. Luke xvii. 20. The Pharisees demanding of our SAVIOUR, "when the kingdom of GOD should come;" that is, when the reign of the Messias should commence; he answers them, "the kingdom of GOD "cometh

" cometh not with observation;" that is, not with any temporal pomp and splendor, so as to draw the eyes of people after it, as the Jews did vainly imagine; but " the kingdom of GOD, ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστιν " is among you;" not within you, as our translation hath improperly rendred it; the kingdom of GOD (he tells them) is already come unto you, the Messias is among you, and ye are not aware of him. In the like sense this phrase is used, Matt. xxi. 43. " The " kingdom of GOD (that is, the gospel) shall be " taken from you, and given to a nation bringing " forth the fruits thereof." And so likewise the phrase of the kingdom of heaven is used, Matt. xi. 11. where speaking of John the baptist, our SAVIOUR saith, " that among them that were born of " women, there hath not risen a greater than John " the Baptist;" that is, there was no greater person than he, under the Jewish dispensation; and yet " he " that is least in the kingdom of heaven," that is, under the dispensation of the gospel, " is greater " than he."

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Now tho' this sense of the kingdom of GOD be not wholly excluded in the text, yet there is another sense of this phrase very usual likewise in the scripture, and which is more agreeable to the scope of our SAVIOUR's argument and discourse, and so it signifies that future state of happiness and glory which good men shall be advanced to in another world, in opposition to this life, and the enjoyments of it, which our SAVIOUR had before forbidden his disciples to be so solicitous about. " Take ye no thought, saying, what " shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or where- " withal shall we be clothed:" and then it follows

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in direct oppoſition to this inordinate and ſolicitous care about worldly things, " but ſeek ye firſt the " kingdom of GOD, and his righteouſneſs." That is, be not ſo ſolicitous about the conveniencies and neceſſaries of this life, as about the happineſs of the other, and the means to it. And this ſenſe of this phraſe of the kingdom of GOD is ſo very frequent in the new teſtament, that I ſhall not need to give particular inſtances of it.

II. What is meant by righteouſneſs, " ſeek ye " firſt the kingdom of GOD, and his righteouſneſs." Righteouſneſs, in the ſtricteſt and moſt proper ſenſe of the word, ſignifies the particular virtue of juſtice; and very frequently in the old teſtament it is uſed for charity to the poor, or almſgiving, Pſal. xxxvii. 25, 26. " I have been young, aud now am old, yet have " I not ſeen the righteous forſaken, nor his ſeed " begging bread; he is ever merciful, and lendeth," and Pſal. cxii. 9. " he hath diſperſed, he hath given " to the poor, his righteouſneſs endureth for ever." But righteouſneſs in its largeſt and moſt extended ſenſe, comprehends all the virtues of a good man; and ſo it ſignifies here in the text, and in many other places of ſcripture.

So that " the kingdom of GOD, and his righte- " ouſneſs," comprehends the whole buſineſs of religion, our laſt end, which is eternal life and happineſs in another world; and the way and means to this end; which is righteouſneſs, or that univerſal goodneſs which GOD requires of us, and whereof he himſelf is a pattern and example to us; for which reaſon 'tis call'd " his righteouſneſs." And in this ſenſe of our laſt end, and the way and means to it, " the " kingdom

" kingdom of heaven, and righteousness," are used in another place, even of this sermon of our SAVIOUR's upon the mount, Matt. v. 20. " except your " righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the " scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into " the kingdom of heaven"; where righteousness is made the necessary means and condition of eternal life. I proceed in the SERM. XCIV.

Second place, to explain what is meant by " seek- " ing first the kingdom of GOD, and his righteous- " ness." And this signifies the greatest intention of mind, and earnestness of endeavour about the business of religion, in order to our attaining of eternal happiness; such a seriousness and earnestness of endeavour as earthly-minded men use about the things of this world. " For after all these things (says our SA- " VIOUR immediately after the text,) do the Gen- " tiles seek; τὰ ἔθνη ἐπιζητεῖ," which words signify an intense care, and vigorous endeavour; " but seek " ye first the kingdom of GOD, and his righteous- " ness;" that is, be ye who profess your selves christians, as intent upon the business of religion, and the salvation of your souls, as the heathen, who are in a great measure ignorant of GOD and another life, are about the things of this life.

And here are two things to be explained.

I. What is here meant by " seeking the kingdom " of GOD, and his righteousness;" and

II. What by " seeking them in the first place."

For the first: a sincere and earnest " seeking of " the kingdom of GOD, and his righteousness," does imply in it these four things.

1. A fix'd design and resolution as to the end;

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that we do not only propound to our selves the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls as our chief end, but that we be immoveably fixed upon it, and always have it in our aim and design; that here we set up our resolution, if it be possible, to be happy for ever; that we have this end always in our eye, and be firmly resolved to do all that we can towards attaining it.

Not that we are obliged always actually to think upon it; but to have it frequently in our minds, and habitually to intend and design it, so as to make it the scope of all our endeavours and actions, and that every thing we do be either directly and immediately in order to it, or some way or other subservient to this design, or however not inconsistent with it; like the term and end of a man's journey, towards which the traveller is continually tending, and hath it always habitually in his intention, tho' he doth not always think of it every step that he takes, and tho' he be not always directly advancing and moving towards it, yet he never knowingly goes out of the way. And tho' he bait and lodge by the way, and does many other things which do not directly set him forward, yet they are all subservient to his journey, or in prosecution of it; or at least no wilful deviations from it. Thus it should be with us, while we are sojourning in this world; our fix'd aim and design should be to get to heaven, and thither we should be continually tending in our desires and endeavours.

And if this resolution be deeply rooted and fixed in our minds, it will govern all our actions, and keep them steady to their main end. Whereas, if we be uncertain and unresolved upon our great end, and be divided

divided between the happineſs of the next life, and the preſent enjoyments of this, we ſhall be fickle and unſteady in all our motions. He that hath two ends, can purſue neither vigorouſly, but while he is moving towards the one, he leans and inclines to the other; and like a needle between two loadſtones, is always in a doubtful and trembling condition; inclines to both, but is conſtant to neither: and this is the meaning of that aphoriſm of St. James, "the double-minded man is unſtable in all his "ways." He that is unreſolv'd as to his main end, hath two minds, and can proſecute nothing vigorouſly: but if our mind be once fixed and reſolved, that will determine and govern all our motions, and inſpire us with diligence, and zeal, and perſeverance in the proſecution of our end. SREM. XCIV.

2. "Seeking the kingdom of GOD and his righ-"teouſneſs;" implies inceſſant care and diligence as to the means; that we make religion our buſineſs, and exerciſe our ſelves in the duties of it, both in publick and private, at proper times and ſeaſons, with the ſame ſerioufneſs and application of mind, as men do in their callings and profeſſions, for the gaining of wealth and preferment; eſpecially on the LORD'S-day, which GOD hath taken to himſelf, and ſet apart for the duties of his worſhip and ſervice. Not that we are excuſed from minding religion at other times; but that thoſe who are preſſed and ſtraitned by the neceſſary cares of this life, may be ſure to mind it then, and may have no colour of excuſe for the neglect of it at that time, which GOD hath allotted for that very purpoſe, and which it is unlawful to employ about our worldly affairs. GOD

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expects that we should serve him at other times, that we should live in an habitual sense of him, and (as Solomon expresseth it, Prov. xxiii. 17.) "Be in the "fear of the LORD all the day long;" so as to be careful not to offend or transgress in any thing, and so as to redeem all opportunities for the exercise of piety, and devotion; but this day he peremptorily challengeth to himself, and expects we should employ it in his service, and dedicate it to religion to the contemplation of GOD and heavenly things, and the care of our immortal souls, with the same seriousness and diligence, as we do upon other days "labour for "the bread which perisheth;" and the less leisure we have upon other days for this purpose, the more intirely should we devote and consecrate this day to the purposes and duties of religion.

Not but that our whole life, and all the actions of it, should be under the government of religion, and directed by the laws and rules of it; and it should be our continual care and endeavour to please GOD in all things, and we should take as much pains, and be as heartily concerned to be good men, as men of the world are to grow rich and great in this world; nay so much more, by how much it is a better and nobler design to improve in grace and virtue, than to prosper and thrive in our temporal estate; and we do not in good earnest "seek the "kingdom of GOD, and his righteousness," if this be not our great study and endeavour, to subdue our lusts, and govern our passions, and, in a word, to reform whatever is amiss in the inward frame and temper of our minds, and in our outward conversation. And indeed nothing does requires greater diligence,

ligence, and attention, and care, than for a man to become truly and thoroughly good, to be meek and humble, and patient and contented, and resigned to the will of GOD in every condition; to be peaceable, and charitable, and placable, and ready to forgive; these are great and difficult things, and, whatever we think, not the work of a wish, or the effect of a sudden resolution before the receiving of the holy sacrament, no nor the fruit of frequent and fervent prayers, without the hearty concurrence of our own care and endeavour, to render our lives such, as we pray GOD by his grace to assist and enable us to be.

3. "Seeking the kingdom of GOD and his righ-"teousness," does further imply zeal and earnestness in the pursuit of this design: and this is a degree above diligence; for zeal is an ardour and fervency of mind in the prosecution of a thing for which you are greatly concerned, and which we vehemently desire to obtain; it is the hottest and most intense degree of our affection towards any thing, of our desire and love, mixed with anger at every thing that stands in our way and hinders us from obtaining what we seek after; such an heat as ambition does commonly inspire men withal, in the pursuit of power and preferment. Such ought to be the temper of our minds, and the edge of our spirits, "in "seeking the kingdom of GOD," as does usually possess men in seeking the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them. We must remember, that it is a kingdom which we seek for, and aspire after; not like the unstable and tottering kingdoms of this world, but "a kingdom which cannot be shaken," as the apostle calls it.

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So that the greatness of the design, and the excellency of what we seek after, will justify and warrant the highest degree of a discreet zeal and fervour in the prosecution of it; and therefore no wonder that the scripture in this matter useth words that import the greatest vehemency and earnestness, bidding us "to strive to enter in at the strait gate, to labour "and watch, to run, and wrestle, and fight," and, in a word, "to give all diligence, to make our "calling and election sure."

Lastly, "seeking the kingdom of God and his "righteousness," does imply patience and perseverance in our endeavours after them, and that we never cease our pursuit of them, 'till we have obtained them; and this, notwithstanding all the difficulties and discouragements, the opposition and persecution that we meet with "for righteousness sake." For this we must expect, and reckon upon before-hand, to encounter many difficulties, and many discouragements in the ways of religion; for "strait is the "gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life," as our LORD himself hath told us: nay we must count to be grievously "persecuted for righteousness sake," and, if GOD see it good for us, "to pass through "many tribulations," before we shall enter "into "the kingdom of God;" and therefore we had need to be armed with a great deal of patience, and a very firm and obstinate resolution, to enable us to bear up, and to hold out against all these; for this is a necessary qualification for our "seeking the "kingdom of GOD and his righteousness." So our LORD hath told us, Matth. x. 21. "he that en-"dureth to the end, shall be saved;" if we "hope "to

" to receive the crown of life, we must be faithful " to the death, Rev. ii. 10." And to the same purpose St. Paul declares, Rom. ii. 7. that they only shall be made partakers of " eternal life, who by patient " continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and ho- " nour, and immortality." SERM. XCIV.

You see what is meant by " seeking the kingdom " of GOD, and his righteousness ;" it remains briefly to be shewn, in the second place, what is meant by seeking these first; " seek ye first the kingdom of " GOD, and his righteousness ;" that is, let this be your main and principal design, so as to take place of all others in your esteem and affections, in your aim and endeavour; in comparison of this, mind nothing else, not the comforts and conveniencies, not the necessaries of life, " what ye shall eat, and what ye shall " drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed." These you see our SAVIOUR instanceth in before the text, as not to be regarded and taken care of, when they come in competition with " the kingdom of GOD, and his " righteousness." And our SAVIOUR tells us elsewhere, that not only none of the comforts and necessaries of life are to be valued against him, and his religion; but that even this temporal life itself, as dear as it is to us, is to be parted withal, and given up, rather than to quit the profession of his truth and religion; Matt. x. 37, 38. " He that loveth father or " mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and " he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is " not worthy of me." He instanceth in the nearest relations, those towards whom we have the most tender and relenting affections, and yet he tells us, that the consideration of his truth and religion ought

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to take place of these, nay even of life itself; for so it follows, and "he that taketh not his cross, and fol- "loweth after me, is not worthy of me." St. Luke expresseth it more strongly and vehemently, Luke xiv. 26. "If any man come to me" (that is, take upon him the profession of my religion) "and hate not "his father, and mother, and wife, and children, "and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, "he cannot be my disciple." When these come in competition with our religion, and the great interest of our eternal salvation, we are to regard and value them no more than if they were the objects of our hatred, but to set aside all consideration of affection to them, so far as it would tempt us from constancy in our religion, and the care of our souls.

So that when our SAVIOUR bids us "first to seek "the kingdom of GOD, and his righteousness," his meaning is, that religion, and the concernments of our souls, and the eternal happiness of them in another world, should be our first and chief care; and that all other things should be made subordinate and subservient to this great design, and to be no farther minded by us, than they really are so: for that which is our great end, will subdue all other things, and bring them into subjection to it, and will reject them, and throw them aside, if they be inconsistent with it. If heaven be our utmost aim, and in order to that, it be our great study and endeavour to be righteous and holy, this resolution and design sincerely entertained, will overrule all other considerations, and make all the things of this world to stoop and give way to that which is our chief end, the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls. And thus I have done with the second thing

I propoſed, namely, what is meant, by "ſeeking "the kingdom of GOD, and his righteouſneſs;" and what "by ſeeking them firſt." SERM. XCIV.

I proceed in the third place, to lay down ſome plain rules for our direction and furtherance "in ſeek-"ing the kingdom of GOD, and his righteouſneſs;" that is, in the great buſineſs of religion.

Firſt, let us always live under a lively and powerful ſenſe of another world; that we are placed here in this world, but for a little while, and that wholly in order to our preparation for a better and happier life. Let this thought be often in our minds: that eternity is the moſt conſiderable duration, and the next world the place of our everlaſting abode, where we muſt dwell and continue for ever; and therefore our preſent ſtate is but of little moment and conſideration to us, but only in order to our future and everlaſting condition. We may pleaſe ourſelves here for a little while with toys and trifles, with dreams and ſhadows of pleaſure and happineſs, and may be exerciſed with ſome troubles and afflictions for a ſhort ſpace, "for a moment (as the apoſtle calls it) our light af-"flictions which are but for a moment," and ſo indeed it is, compared with all eternity; but the ſubſtantial and durable happineſs or miſery remain for men in the other world, and will certainly be their portion, according as they have demeaned themſelves in this world.

Now the ſerious conſideration of this cannot fail to put us upon vigorous preparations for another world, and to make us wholly intent upon our eternal concernments, and to reſolve, whatever becomes of us in this world, to take effectual care that we may

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be happy for ever. He that firmly believes the immortality of his soul, and a life after death, which will never have an end, must needs take into consideration his whole duration, and bend all his care and thoughts, how he may avoid the greatest and most lasting misery, and secure to himself an immortality of bliss and happiness.

Secondly, let us always be under a conviction of the absolute and indispensable necessity of holiness and righteousness, as the only way and means whereby the kingdom of GOD is to be attained, and that holiness and happiness are not to be separated, the one being a necessary condition and qualification for the other; and consequently, that it is the vainest thing in the world for any man to hope to enter into the kingdom of GOD, without endeavouring after his righteousness; there is so strong a connexion between them, that a man may as reasonably expect to be well and at ease without health, as to be happy without holiness; for this makes us like to GOD, and our likeness and conformity to GOD, is that alone which can make us capable of the blessed sight and enjoyment of GOD. We must be "partakers of the divine nature," in order to our participation of the divine blessedness. And the consideration of this will effectually engage us "to seek the righteousness of GOD," without which we shall never enter into his kingdom; and "to follow holiness, without which no man shall see the "LORD."

Thirdly, let us always remember that righteousness is of a great extent, and comprehends in it all goodness; it takes in all the duties of religion, and the practice of all of them; it is a complication of

of all graces and virtues, of all the parts and ingredients, of all the duties and offices of a good man. To denominate a man righteous, all causes must concur; all the essential principles and parts of religion and goodness must meet to together; knowledge and practice, faith and good works, right opinions and real virtues, an orthodox profession and a holy life, abstaining from sin and doing of righteousness, purity of heart and unspotted manners, godliness and honesty, the bridling of our tongue, and the government of our passions, and "above all things charity, "which is the band of perfection."

For righteousness is our conformity to the law of God, as unrighteousness and sin is the transgression of it: now this, if it be real and sincere, will be uniform and universal, equally respecting all the laws of God, and every part of our known duty, and will not content itself with an especial regard to one or two precepts of the law, tho' never so considerable, and then allow itself in the neglect and violation of the rest, no, nor with the observation of the duties of one table of the law, if it overlook the other; no, nor with obedience to all the commandments of God, one only excepted. St. James hath put this very case, and determined it, "that he that shall keep the "whole law, save only that he offend in one point, "is guilty of all;" that is, he is not sincere in his obedience to the rest: and therefore if we "seek "the righteousness of God," our righteousness must be universal; "as he that hath called us is holy, so "must we be holy in all manner of conversation," in the tenor of our actions, and the whole course of our lives; and any one reigning sin and vice, any gross

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and notorious defect in the virtues of a good life, will spoil our righteousness, and will effectually shut us out of the kingdom of heaven.

Fourthly, let us wisely subordinate the several parts and duties of religion to one another, according to the intrinsical worth and value of them, that so we may mind every part of religion in its due place, and according to the true nature and importance of it. Knowledge and faith are in order to practice, and a good life; and signify nothing unless they produce that; the means of religion, such as prayer and fasting, diligent reading, and hearing the word of God, reverent and devout receiving of the blessed sacrament, are of less account and value, than that which is the end of all these, which is to make us inwardly and really good, and "fruitful in all the works of righ-"teousness, which by Jesus Christ are to the "praise and glory of God." And therefore the means of religion which I have mentioned, are to be regarded and used by us, in order to the attaining of these ends, without which they are mere formality and hypocrisy, and instead of finding acceptance with God, they are "an abomination to him, and "his soul hates them."

And so likewise the circumstances of religion are less considerable than the substantial means and instruments of it. And therefore all rites and ceremonies are in religion of less consideration, than the substance of God's worship, and ought always to be subordinate to it. In like manner the moral duties of religion, comprehended under "the two great "commandments of the love of God, and our "neighbour," because they are of eternal and indispensable

penſable obligation, are to be preferr'd to matters of meer poſitive inſtitution; and where they cannot ſtand together, that which is poſitive ought to be ſet aſide, and to give way for the preſent to that which is moral and good in its own nature, and not only, becauſe it is commanded and enjoin'd; for in this caſe GOD hath expreſly declared, that "he will have "mercy, and not ſacrifice." Upon which ground our SAVIOUR declares, that the law of the ſabbath ought to give place to works of mercy. Upon the ſame account peace and charity are to be valued above matters of nicety and ſcruple, of doubtful diſpute and controverſy; becauſe the former are unqueſtionably good, the latter doubtfully and uncertainly ſo. SERM. XCIV.

All theſe things ought to be conſider'd, and are of great moment to make a man ſincerely and wiſely religious. For men may keep a great ſtir about ſome parts of religion, and be very careful and diligent, zealous and earneſt about the means and inſtruments of religion, and in the exerciſes of piety and devotion; and yet be deſtitute of the power and life of it, and fall ſhort of that inward, and real, and ſubſtantial righteouſneſs, which alone can qualify us for the kingdom of GOD.

The fifth and laſt direction I would give, is this; that we have a particular regard to the great duty of charity, or almſgiving, this being very frequently in ſcripture called righteouſneſs, as being an eminent part of religion, and a great evidence of the truth and ſincerity of our piety. And this our SAVIOUR particularly directs to, as the way to "the kingdom "of GOD," Luke xii. 33. After this general exhortation, "to ſeek the kingdom of GOD," he inſtanceth

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ſtanceth in charity, as the direct way to it; "give "alms, provide for your ſelves bags that wax not "old, a treaſure in the heavens, which faileth not." And elſewhere our SAVIOUR ſpeaks of this grace and virtue, as that which, above all others, will make way for our admiſſion into heaven, Luke xvi. 9. "I "ſay unto you, make to your ſelves friends of the "mammon of unrighteouſneſs, that when ye fail, "they may receive you (or ye may be received) into "everlaſting habitations". And St. Paul calls it, "laying up in ſtore for our ſelves a good foundation;" or (as the word may better be render'd in this place) "a good treaſure againſt the time to come, that we "may lay hold on eternal life," 1 Tim. vi. 19. St. James ſpeaks of it, as a main and moſt eſſential part of religion, and the great evidence of a true and ſincere piety, Jam. i. 27. "Pure religion, and un-"defiled before GOD and the FATHER, is this; to "viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction." Finally, our LORD inſtanceth in this, as the very thing which will admit us into, or ſhut us out of heaven; by the performance whereof we ſhall be abſolved, and for the neglect thereof we ſhall be condemned in the judgment of the great day, Matt. xxv. So that this part of righteouſneſs or religion, ought in a more eſpecial manner to be regarded by us; becauſe upon the performance or neglect of this duty, our eternal happineſs doth ſo much depend.

The fourth and laſt thing only remains to be ſpoken to; which is, to ſet before you the moſt proper and powerful motives and encouragements, to the minding of this great intereſt and concernment. But this will be the ſubject of another diſcourſe.

SERMON

SERMON XCV.

Religion, our first and great concernment.

MATTH. vi. 33.

But seek ye first the kingdom of GOD, *and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

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The second sermon on this text.

THESE words, which I began to discourse upon the last day, are a strict charge and command to all christians, to mind the business of religion in the first place, and to take all imaginable care to secure the happiness of another life; "but seek ye first the kingdom of GOD, and his righ-" teousness; and all these things shall be added un-" to you." In the handling of which argument,

First, I explained what is meant " by the king-" dom of GOD, and his righteousness."

Secondly, I shew'd what is meant " by seeking " these;" and what " by seeking them first."

Thirdly, I laid down some rules for our direction and furtherance in this great business.

I shall now proceed to represent to you in the

Fourth and last place, some of the most proper and powerful arguments and encouragements, to engage us to the minding of this great interest and concernment; amongst which, I shall in the last place particularly consider the encouragement here given in the text, " seek ye first the kingdom of

" GOD,

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" God, and his righteousness; and all these things " shall be added unto you."

First, my first argument shall be from the worth and excellency of the things we seek, " the " kingdom of God, and his righteousness;" which are certainly the greatest and best things we can seek. The kingdom of God, is the eternal salvation of our souls, everlasting life and happiness in another world, which, to animate our endeavours, and to tempt our ambition the more, are set forth to us under the notion of a kingdom. And what will not men do to obtain that? what pains will they not take? what hazards will they not run? what difficulties will they not grapple with, to break through if they can, to come to a kingdom? which when they have obtained, they are exposed to as many, and commonly to more cares and fears, to greater difficulties and dangers in the keeping, than they were for the getting of it: and yet all this men will do for a corruptible crown, for one of the petty kingdoms and principalities of this world, which are continually tottering, and ready to be overturned by open violence, or to be undermined by secret treachery. But the kingdom which I am speaking of, and persuading you and my self to seek after, is not like the kingdoms of men, and of this world; it is called the kingdom of God, to signify to us the excellency and stability of it; as much beyond any of the kingdoms of this world, as the heavens are high above the earth, and as God is greater than man; " a kingdom which cannot be shaken, " a crown which fadeth not away," a sceptre which cannot be wrested from us.

But

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But to quit the metaphor, and speak to the thing; the kingdom of GOD imports the eternal salvation of our souls; I say of our souls, which both in respect of the dignity of our nature, and their immortal duration, are infinitely more valuable than any of the perishing things of this world, and ought to be much dearer to us. Other things are without us, they neither constitute our being, nor are essential to our happiness; but our souls are our selves, and the loss of them is our utter ruin and destruction. So that nothing is to be regarded by us with equal care and concernment, as the salvation of our immortal souls; that is, that we may be rescued from eternal misery, and everlastingly happy in another world. And can we be at too much cost and pains upon such a design, to escape so dismal a condition, so dreadful a ruin, as that of body and soul to all eternity? can any man be concerned enough to bring about so great a good to himself? or, can he purchase it too dear, whatever he give or part with for it? a good so desirable, and so durable, as our being happy for ever. When we purchase the things of this world, the riches and honours of it, at the expence of so much time, and care, and trouble, we pay dear for trifles and fancies; but eternal happiness is a jewel of so inestimable a price, that a wise merchant will have it at any rate, and "sell all that he hath to purchase it."

Of such value is the kingdom of GOD; and next to it is righteousness, which is the only way and means whereby this kingdom is to be attained, and therefore to be sought by us with the greatest dili-

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gence and earneſtneſs: for that which is the only means to a great and deſirable end, and which alone can make us capable of that end, and which in truth is a degree of it, is valuable next to the end, and almoſt equally with it; and ſuch is righteouſneſs, in reſpect of the kingdom of GOD; it is the only means to it, it is that alone which qualifies us, and makes us capable of happineſs; nay, it is an eſſential ingredient into it, and that which does in a great meaſure conſtitute the happineſs of heaven: for that temper of mind, that conformity and likeneſs to GOD, which holineſs and righteouſneſs brings us to, is the true foundation of our happineſs, and according to the beſt apprehenſions we have now of it, is the very formal cauſe and eſſence of our bleſſedneſs. So St. John tells us, 1 Joh. iii. 2. "It doth "not yet appear what we ſhall be; but we know "that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him;" that is, we do not now diſtinctly underſtand wherein the happineſs of the next life conſiſts, we are not able to frame a clear and perfect idea of it; but this we know in general, that it conſiſts in our likeneſs to GOD, in a conformity to the moral perfections of the divine nature, which are expreſt by the name of purity and holineſs; and therefore every one that hopes for the happineſs of heaven, muſt endeavour after holineſs; "every man that "hath this hope in him, muſt purify himſelf, even "as he is pure."

So that the things which I am preſſing you to ſeek after, are moſt effectually recommended, by telling you what they are; the kingdom of GOD is eternal life and happineſs, and his righteouſneſs is

univerſal

universal holiness and goodness, without which no man is qualified for this blessed state. Now if there be any thing better than goodness, any thing more desirable than a happiness which hath no bounds, nor no end; do not mind them, nor look after them: but if there be not; then certainly these are worthy of the care and endeavour of our whole life.

Secondly, another consideration that should very much excite and quicken our endeavour and diligence in seeking these things, is the difficulty of obtaining them. This, I confess, is no encouragement, but it is a very good motive and argument to whet our industry in seeking these things, when we plainly see that they are not to be had upon other Terms. And this consideration our SAVIOUR useth to quicken us to strive and to contend earnestly for eternal life, Matt. vii. 14. "because strait is the gate, and nar-"row is the way which leadeth to life, and few "there be that find it?" And Luke xiii. 24. "strive "to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto "you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

Seeking here, in opposition to striving, is a faint and weak endeavour, which will not carry us through this narrow and difficult passage; and this is the reason why many miscarry, who make some attempts towards heaven; but they do not strive, they do not put forth any vigorous endeavours to get thither.

Now the difficulty of attaining eternal happiness, ariseth from the difficulty of the way and means to it; and it is therefore hard to attain the kingdom of GOD, because it is hard to attain his righteousness. As desirable as it is, it must be acknowledged very difficult for a man to raise himself to that temper

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and diſpoſition of mind, ſo to ſubdue his luſts, and govern his paſſions, to bridle his tongue, and order all the actions of his life, as is neceſſary to qualify him for happineſs, and to make him fit to be admitted into the kingdom of GOD.

And this difficulty is chiefly in our ſelves, but greatly increaſed by temptation and oppoſition from without: chiefly, I ſay, in our ſelves, from the ſtrong bias of our evil and corrupt inclinations, and the ſtrong power of vicious habits and cuſtoms, which when they are grown inveterate, do tyrannize over us, and make us perfect ſlaves, and lead us captive at their pleaſure; ſo that our nature muſt be quite chang'd, and as the apoſtle expreſſeth it, we muſt be "renewed in the ſpirit of our minds," our ſouls muſt be new moulded and faſhioned, we muſt be, as it were, created, and born again, before we can enter into the kingdom of GOD. In this our SAVIOUR is poſitive and peremptory, John iii. 33. "Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, except a man be born "again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of GOD." This difficulty indeed is greateſt at firſt, but it is conſiderable afterwards, 'till a thorough change be made, and new inclinations planted in us, and the contrary habits of grace and virtue be ſuper-induced.

And that which increaſeth the difficulty is outward temptation and oppoſition from the world, and the devil; which to withſtand and reſiſt, requires great courage and reſolution, great watchfulneſs and guard over our ſelves. But yet for our comfort, theſe difficulties are not inſuperable to that grace and aſſiſtance, which GOD is always ready to afford to us upon ſo good an occaſion, and to ſo good

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a purpose; "greater is he that is in you, than he that "is in the world." And this, I am sure, is matter of great encouragement to us, that tho' the difficulty of "working out our salvation" be great, yet if we do in good earnest set about it, GOD is ready to assist and second our sincere endeavours, "to work in us "both to will and to do of his own goodness," and so to prevent us with his gracious favour, and to further us with his continual aid, that finally by his mercy we may obtain eternal life. SERM. XCV.

Thirdly, another powerful argument to care and diligence, is the fatal danger of miscarriage in a matter of so great concernment. We may do many things in religion, and take some pains to get to heaven, and yet fall short of it. The rich young man in the gospel, our SAVIOUR tells us, was "not "far from the kingdom of GOD," and he broke with our SAVIOUR only upon one point, he was too much addicted to the world, and loth to part with his great possessions, and distribute them in charity to the poor, and thereupon he left our SAVIOUR, and for any thing we can find, never returned to him again.

If the world govern and bear sway in our hearts, if we "mind earthly things" first, and make these our chief care and design, "the kingdom of GOD "and his righteousness shall not be added unto us;" if we will not mind them in the first place, they are too good to be accessaries.

And if upon any one point we miscarry, either out of love to the world, or affection to any other lust or vice that we are loth to part withal, our miscarriage is fatal, and the ruin which we bring upon

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our selves irreparable; for the soul once lost, is lost for ever. If we have neglected the opportunity of "working out our own salvation," while we are in this world, it will never return into our power again, death will shut the door against us, and we shall never "see the kingdom of GOD."

Fourthly, it is a mighty encouragement to us to consider, that if we sincerely "seek the kingdom of "GOD, and his righteousness," there is not only a fair probability of obtaining them, but all the security we can desire. Men may be in good earnest for the things of this World, may love them with all their hearts and souls (as we see too many do) and seek them with all their might and strength, and yet after all their endeavours may be shamefully frustrated and disappointed of their end. There are many examples of this kind daily before our eyes, and yet men are not discouraged from seeking these things. A fair probability, nay almost a possibility of attaining them, is enough to a worldly-minded man to drudge and toil for them. Why the same affection, the same zeal, the same unwearied endeavour to please GOD, and to save our souls, would infallibly bring us to heaven. It was a sad but true saying of cardinal Wolsey, when he was leaving the world, "had I been but as "careful to please GOD, as I have been to serve my "prince, he would not have forsaken me now in the "time of my gray hairs."

Nay, it is to be hoped, that less diligence and care about the concernments of our souls, and another life, than many men use about the things of this life, will secure our eternal happiness, or else it is to be feared, that but very few would be saved: and who would

would not place his industry and endeavour upon a design in which he is sure not to miscarry, if he do but heartily and in good earnest pursue it? especially when it will be of infinite greater advantage to him, than any design he can propound to himself for this world. If a man may be certainly happy for ever, upon the same, or easier terms, than he can ordinarily compass any of those little designs which men propose to themselves in this world, who would not seek that which is most worthy the having, and which he is surest to obtain? SERM. XCV.

Fifthly, and lastly, the encouragement here in the text is not inconsiderable; that if "we seek the kingdom of GOD and his righteousness, all these things "shall be added unto us." This certainly is a very tempting consideration; for who would not be glad to reconcile the enjoyment of this world with the hopes of heaven, and eternal happiness? But men do not generally like our SAVIOUR's method, they would seek the things of this world in the first place, and get to heaven at last; they would be content to seek the one, and have the other cast in and conferred upon them, without their seeking. But this will not be granted, this way will not do. And yet our SAVIOUR has gone as far as one would think could in reason be desired; he hath promised that if we will make religion, and the salvation of our souls, our first and chief care, that "all these things shall be added "unto us." So that the design of going to heaven, and being happy for ever, is no ways inconsistent with a competent portion of the things of this life. "Godliness (the apostle tells us) hath the "promise of this life, and of that which is to come." The business of religion, the practice of a holy and virtuous

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virtuous life, is no hindrance to a man's thriving in his temporal estate; nay, in many respects it is apt to promote and advance it; by engaging us to diligence in our calling, and by deriving the blessing of GOD upon our honest and lawful endeavours; by obliging us to the strict and constant practice of truth and justice, and fidelity in all our dealings and commerce, which are the best way to establish a clear and solid reputation, and good esteem among men, which is an unspeakable advantage in business, and, at the long run, one of the best and most lasting instruments of prosperity and success.

Besides, that religion frees a man from those passions and vices, which do naturally tend to dissipate and ruin mens estates; as intemperance and lewdness, which are every way chargeable vices, and do not only take men off from business, and render them unfit for it; but waste their estates, and bring many other inconveniences upon their persons and families. Religion makes men meek and peaceable, and inoffensive in word and deed, which is a great security against chargeable suits and contentions, and all sorts of injuries and affronts from others. Among all the beatitudes of our SAVIOUR, he only promiseth temporal happiness to meekness, "blessed are the meek, for "they shall inherit the earth." They who provoke and offend no body, are likely to be the least disturbed and disquieted by others in their possessions and enjoyments; "who will harm you (saith the apostle, 1 Pet. "iii. 13.) if ye be followers of that which is good?" Some may be so perverse as to persecute a man for his goodness; but it rarely happens; most men have not only a kindness, but a veneration for true goodness.

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By all these ways religion naturally tends to the temporal prosperity of men, and the promoting of their welfare and happiness even in this world; besides that the providence of GOD is very peculiarly concerned for good men, and a special blessing attends them in all their undertakings. So that excepting the case of persecution (which GOD will particularly consider, and reward in another world) the religious and good man, who sincerely "seeks the kingdom of GOD, "and his righteousness," stands as fair, and is upon as good terms, for all the lawful enjoyments of this world, as he that makes it his only design to be rich and great in this world; nay, as to the necessaries of this life, and a competency of outward things, he hath a much greater and better security from the providence and promise of GOD, than the men of the world have by all their care and pains. SERM. XCV.

Besides, that he hath this considerable advantage, by minding these things only as accessaries, that if he miss of them, he hath something better to support him in the want of them; being secure of a happiness which this world can neither give nor take from him. But now the worldly man, if he be defeated in his designs, is of all men most miserable, because he hath nothing else to comfort him, nothing else to trust to; he fails of his hopes as to this world, and hath done what in him lies to make his case desperate as to the other.

Upon all these considerations and encouragements, you see how reasonable it is, that we should make religion, and the concernment of another life, our great care and business. And yet how are these neglected by the greatest part of mankind! and by the best of us

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(God knows) not minded as they ought, and as they deserve! What can we say for ourselves in excuse of so intolerable a folly? There are two or three things which men commonly pretend, if not in justification, yet in mitigation and excuse of this great neglect.

First, they pretend great difficulties and discouragements in the ways of religion. This I have already acknowledged to be true, so far as to awaken our care, and to whet our industry; but by no means to make us despond and give over all care of so great a concernment, because of the difficulties it is attended withal. Men who have no mind to a thing are apt to imagine great difficulties in the attaining of it, and to magnify them in their fancies beyond reason. As the people of Israel, when they were to enter into Canaan (which was the type of the kingdom of heaven) represented the inhabitants of the land, whom they were to conquer, more terrible than in truth they were; reporting to one another, that the land was full of giants, and sons of Anak, men of prodigious stature, and cities walled up to heaven. And this the wise man observes to be the perpetual excuse of the slothful; when they have no mind to a thing, they say "there is "a lion in the way;" that is, they fancy to themselves dangers and terrors which are not. Thus men who are averse from religion, and have no mind to be at the trouble and pains to get to heaven, are apt to complain of the monstrous and insuperable difficulties of religion, and how hard it is for a man to mortify his lusts, and subdue his appetites, and govern his passions, and to do all those things which are necessary to bring him to heaven. Well! it is acknowledged

knowledged to be difficult, and is it not so to get an estate, and to rise to any thing in this world? The true pains which men take about these things, shew that they are difficult; only when men have a mind to a thing, and their heart is set upon it, they do not stand to complain of the difficulty, but buckle to it, and grapple with it. SERM. XCV.

Is religion difficult? and what is not so, that is good for any thing? is not the law a difficult and crabbed study? does it not require great labour, and perpetual drudging to excel in any kind of knowledge, to be master of any art or profession. In a word, is there any thing in the world worthy the having, that is to be gotten without pains? and is eternal life and glory the only slight and inconsiderable thing, that is not worth our care and industry? Is it fit that so great a good should be exposed to the faint and idle wishes, to the cheap and lazy endeavours of slothful men? For what reason? nay, with what conscience can we bid less for heaven and eternal life, than men are contented to give for the things of the world; things of no value in comparison, not worthy the toiling for, not sure to be attained by all our endeavours; things which "perish in the using," and which, when we have them, we are liable to be deprived of by a thousand accidents? one fit of a fever may shatter our understandings, and confound all our knowledge, and turn us into fools and idiots; an inundation or a fire may sweep away and devour our estates; a succession of calamities may in a few hours make the richest and greatest man as poor as Job, and set him upon a dunghil.

But be the difficulty what it will of attaining "the

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"kingdom of GOD, and his righteousness," they are to be sought at any rate; because they are absolutely necessary, and we miserable and undone if we have them not. And therefore not to dissemble in the matter, the difficulties of religion are considerable; but then they are much greater at first, and will every day abate and grow less, and the work by degrees will become easy, and turn into pleasure and delight; a pleasure so great, as none knows but he that hath it; and he that hath it, would not exchange it for all the sensual pleasures and enjoyments of this world.

Secondly, others pretend want of time for the minding of so great a work, and 'tis very true, that all persons have not equal leisure for this purpose; some are much more straitned than others, and more taken up with the necessary cares of this life: but GOD hath put no man upon this hard necessity, that for want of time he shall be forced to neglect his body and his health, his family and estate, to save his soul. And yet if any man were brought to this distress, it were well worth his while to secure his eternal salvation, tho' it were with the neglect and loss of all other things. But those who are most straitned for time, have so much as is absolutely necessary: for there is a considerable part of religion which does not require time, but resolution and care: not to commit sin, not to break the laws of GOD, not to be intemperate, "to "make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts "thereof," does not spend time, but saves it for better purposes; so that every man hath time not to do that which he ought not to do: and for the positive part of religion, whether it consists in the exercise of our minds, or in the external acts of religion:

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no man is so distressed, but he hath time to think of heaven, and eternity; time to love GOD, to esteem him, and delight in him above all things. And this a man may do very frequently, and very acceptably, while he is labouring and travelling about his worldly affairs, while his hand is upon the plough, his heart may be with GOD; and while he converseth here upon earth, his thoughts and affections may be in heaven. Every man hath time to pray to GOD every day, for his mercy and forgiveness, for his grace and assistance, for his preservation and support, and to thank him heartily for all his blessings and benefits. And a little time seriously employed in this kind, would have the same acceptance with GOD, as the more solemn and longer devotions of those who have more leisure and opportunities for them. To be sure we have all of us time to serve GOD upon his own day, and to employ it wholly in the exercises of piety, and in the care and consideration of our souls.

But this, when all is said, is the case but of a very few; most of us have no colour for this complaint; *non inopes temporis, sed prodigi sumus*, (as Seneca says) "we are not poor, but prodigal of our time, "and lavish it away profusely upon folly and va- "nity." Our vices and lusts, our pleasures and diversions, consume and divert those precious hours, which should be employed to these better purposes; nay many times time oppresseth us, and is a burden to us, and lies upon our hands, and we know not how to get rid of it; and yet we choose rather to let it run waste, than to bestow it upon religion, and the care of our souls; insomuch that I fear this will be the

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the condition of many, that when they were at a loss what to do with their time, and knew not how to spend it, they would not lay it out upon that which was best and most necessary; for this surely is the very best use that can be made of time, to prepare and provide for eternity.

Thirdly, others pretend it will be time enough to mind these things hereafter. But this (as bad excuses seldom hang together, and agree with one another) directly contradicts the former pretence, which supposeth so much time necessary, and more than many have to spare; and yet now they would make us believe that a very little time will suffice for this work, that it may be done at any time, even just when we are going out of this world. But this, of all other, is the strangest interpretation of "seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness "first," to put it off to the very last. This surely is a greater error on the other hand, to think that the business of religion is so quickly to be dispatched, and that the great work of our lives can be crowded into so narrow a corner of it, that the time of sickness and old age, nay, the hour of death, well employed to this purpose, will be sufficient. Alas! what can we then do that is good for any thing? that can in reason be thought either acceptable to God, or available for our selves? when we have not sense and understanding enough to dispose of our temporal concernments, and to make our wills, do we think we shall be fit to repent of the sins and miscarriages of our whole lives, and to make our peace with God? every man must not expect to have Saul's fortune, who when he was wearied with seeking

ing his father's asses, met with a kingdom. We must not think when we are tired with pursuing the follies and vanities of this world, to retire into heaven, and "to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, "and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." SERM. XCV.

Our SAVIOUR hath taken care to caution us against this desperate folly, by a parable to this very purpose, of the foolish virgins, who having trifled away their time till the bridegroom was coming, and neglected to get oil into their lamps, (by which we are to understand all those good preparations and dispositions which are necessary to qualify us for the kingdom of GOD) I say, having neglected their opportunity of getting this oil, while they were looking after it too late, the door was shut against them; they thought to have repaired all at last, by borrowing of others, and supplying themselves that way.

And thus many deceive themselves, hoping to be supplied out of another store, when they have no grace and goodness of their own; out of the treasure of the church, from the redundant merit of the saints, and their works of supererogation; of which some believe (I know not for what reason) that there is a great stock which the pope may dispose of, to supply those who have taken no care to get oil into their lamps. But I know not for what reason works of supererogation are supposed; the wise virgins knew not of any merit they had to spare, it was the foolish virgins only that entertained this senseless conceit. I am sure the parable insinuates the quite contrary, that the best and holiest persons (which are represented by the wise virgins) have nothing

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thing to ſpare for the ſupply of others, who have been careleſs of their ſouls; "the fooliſh ſaid unto "the wiſe, give us of your oil, for our lamps are "gone out; but the wiſe anſwered, ſaying, not ſo, "leſt there be not enough for us and you, but go "ye rather to them that ſell, and buy for your "ſelves." It ſeems they had no works of ſupererogation that they knew of, but they do ironically ſend them to a market that was ſet up ſomewhere, and where theſe things were pretended to be ſold; but how they ſped, the concluſion of the parable tells us, that whilſt they were running about in great haſte to make this purchaſe of the merits and good works of others, "the bridegroom came," and the wiſe virgins that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the reſt were ſhut out.

And there are thoſe likewiſe among our ſelves, who having been careleſs to qualify themſelves for the kingdom of GOD, hope to be ſupplied out of the infinite treaſures of CHRIST's merits: but this alſo is a vain hope. For tho' there be merit enough in the death and ſufferings of CHRIST, to ſave mankind, yet no man can lay claim thereto, who does not perform the conditions of the goſpel.

Others think by ſending for the miniſter, when the phyſician hath given them over, to receive in few hours ſuch advice and direction, as will do their buſineſs, as effectually, as if they had minded religion all their lives long; and that a few devout prayers ſaid over them when they are juſt embarking for another world, will, like a magical wind, immediately waft them over into the regions of bliſs and immortality.

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But let us not deceive our ſelves; we may defer the buſineſs ſo long, 'till we ſhall get nothing by our late application to GOD, and crying to him, "LORD, "LORD, open unto us," but that ſevere anſwer, "depart from me, ye workers of inquity, I know "ye not whence ye are." If we would not have this our doom, let us "firſt ſeek the kingdom of "GOD, and his righteouſneſs;" that ſo, "having "our fruit unto holineſs, our end may be everlaſt-"ing life."

SERMON XCVI.

The wiſdom of religion.

PSAL. cxix. 96.

I have ſeen end of of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad.

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THIS pſalm ſeems to have a great deal more of poetical number and skill in it, than at this diſtance from the time and age in which it was written, we can eaſily underſtand: the main ſcope and deſign of it is very plain and obvious; namely, to magnify the law of GOD, and the obſervation of its precepts, as that wherein true religion doth mainly conſiſt. And indeed if we attentively read and conſider it, every part of this pſalm does with great variety of expreſſion, and yet very little difference of the ſenſe, deſcant upon the ſame ground, viz. the excellency and perfection of the law of GOD. And the words of the text ſeem to be as full and

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comprehensive of the sense and design of the whole psalm, as any one sentence in it; "I have seen an "end of all perfection, but thy commandment is ex- "ceeding broad."

These words are variously rendred, and understood by interpreters, who yet in this variety do very much conspire and agree in the same sense. The chaldee paraphrase renders the words thus, "I have seen an "end of all things, about which I have employ'd "my care; but thy commandment is very large." The Syriac version thus, "I have seen an end of all "regions and countries" (that is, I have found the compass of this habitable world to be finite and limited) "but thy commandment is of a vast extent." Others explain it thus, "I have seen an end of all "perfection;" that is, of all the things of this world, which men value and esteem at so high a rate; of all worldly wisdom and knowledge, of wealth and honour, and greatness, which do all perish and pass away; "but thy law is eternal, and still abideth "the same;" or, as the scripture elsewhere expresseth it, "the word of the LORD endureth for ever."

Thy law; that is, the rule of our duty natural and revealed; or, in a word, religion, which consists in the knowledge and practice of the laws of GOD, is of greater perfection, than all other things which are so highly valued in this world: for the perfection of it is infinite, and of a vast influence and extent; it reacheth to the whole man, to the happiness of body and soul, to our whole duration both in this world, and the next, of this life, and of that which is to come. And this will clearly appear, if we consider the reasonableness and the wisdom of religion, which consists

consists in the knowledge of GOD, and the keeping of his laws. SERM. XCVI.

First, the reasonableness of religion, which is able to give a very good account of it self, because it settles the mind of man upon a firm basis, and keeps it from rolling in perpetual uncertainty; whereas atheism and infidelity wants a stable foundation, it centers no where but in the denial of GOD and religion, and yet substitutes no principle, no tenable and constituent scheme of things in the place of them; its whole business is to unravel all things, to unsettle the mind of man, and to shake all the common notions and received principles of mankind; it bends its whole force to pull down and to destroy, but lays no foundation to build any thing upon, in the stead of that which it pulls down.

It runs upon that great absurdity which Aristotle (who was always thought a great master of reason) does every where decry, as a principle unworthy of a philosopher; namely, a progress of causes *in infinitum*, and without end; that this was the cause of that, and a third thing of that, and so on without end, which amounts to just nothing; and finally resolves an infinite number of effects into no first cause; than which nothing can be more unskilful and bungling, and less worthy of a philosopher. But this I do not intend at present to insist upon, having treated largely on the same subject upon another * occasion. I shall therefore proceed in the

Second place, to consider the wisdom of religion, "the fear of the LORD is wisdom", so saith the psalmist; it is true wisdom indeed, it is "the begin-

* Vide *Sermon* 1st, *of the first Volume published by the Author.*

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" ning of wisdom," *caput sapientiæ*, the top and perfection of all wisdom. Here true wisdom begins, and upon this foundation it is raised and carried on to perfection; and I shall in my following discourse endeavour to make out these two things.

First, that true wisdom begins and is founded in religion, in the fear of GOD, and in the keeping of his commandments.

Secondly, that this is the perfection of wisdom; there is no wisdom without this, nor beyond it.

First, true wisdom begins and is founded in religion, and the fear of GOD, and regard to his laws. This is the first principle of wisdom, and the foundation upon which the whole design of our happiness is to be built. This is in the first place to be supposed, and to be taken into consideration in all the designs and actions of men: this is to govern our whole life, and to have a main influence upon all the affairs and concernments of it. As the first principle of humane society, and that which is to run thro' the whole frame of it, is the publick good; this was always to be taken into consideration, and to give law to all laws and constitutions about it: so religion is the first principle of humane wisdom, by which all our actions are to be conducted and governed; and all wisdom which does not begin here, and lay religion for its foundation, is preposterous, and begins at the wrong end; and is just as if in the forming of humane society, every one in the settlement of the constitution, and the framing of laws, should have an eye to his own private and particular advantage, without regard to the publick good, which is the great end of society, and the rule and measure of government and laws,

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and in the laſt iſſue and reſult of things, the only way to procure the ſettled welfare, and to ſecure the laſting intereſts of particular perſons, ſo far as that is conſiſtent with the publick good. And it would be a very prepoſterous policy to go about to found humane ſociety upon any other terms, and would certainly end in miſchief and confuſion. SERM. XCVI.

And ſuch is all the wiſdom of men, in relation to their true happineſs, which does not begin with religion, and lay its foundation there: which does not take into conſideration GOD and his providence, and a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments after this life. All wiſdom which does not proceed upon a ſuppoſition of the truth and reality of theſe principles, will certainly end in ſhame and diſappointment, in miſery and ruin; becauſe it builds a houſe upon the ſand, which when it comes to be tried by ſtreſs of weather, and aſſaulted by violent ſtorms, will undoubtedly fall, and the fall of it will be great.

And this error every man commits, who purſues happineſs by following his own inclination, and gratifying his irregular deſires, without any conſideration of GOD, and of the reſtraint which his laws have laid upon us, not for his own pleaſure, but for our good. For when all things are duly conſider'd, and all accounts caſt up, it will appear upon a juſt calculation of things, that all the reſtraints which the laws of GOD lay upon men, are highly reaſonable, and greatly for their benefit and advantage, and do not abridge us of any true pleaſure or happineſs; but are wiſe and merciful proviſions of heaven, to prevent our harm and miſchief; ſo that we are not wiſe, if we act without regard to GOD, and his laws, and are not

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not willing to be govern'd by him, who loves us better than we do ourselves, and truly designs our happiness, and commands us nothing but what directly tends to it. For the laws of God are not arbitrary constitutions, and mere instances of sovereign will and power; but wise rules and means to procure and advance our happiness.

And in like manner, all that wisdom which men use to compass their worldly designs, of riches and greatness, without consideration of the providence of God, and dependence upon it for the success of our affairs, is all perfect folly and mistake. For tho' the design be never so well laid, and vigorously prosecuted, and no means which humane wisdom can devise for the attaining of our end, have been omitted by us; yet if we leave God out of the account, we forget that which is principal, and signifies more to the success of any design, than all other things put together. For if God favours our designs, the most improbable shall take effect; and if he blow upon them the most likely shall miscarry. Whenever he pleaseth to interpose to cross the counsels and designs of men, "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the "strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to "men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill; "but time and chance happens to all."

So that it is great folly not to consider the providence of God in all our designs and undertakings, not to implore his favour and blessing, without which nothing that we take in hand can prosper. That which is principal to any purpose, ought to be considered in the first place, nothing being to be attempted either without or against it. And such is the providence

dence of GOD in all humane affairs; it is more conſiderable to the promoting or hindring of any event, than all things in the world beſides; and therefore all policy, which ſets aſide GOD and his providence, is vain; becauſe "there is no wiſdom, nor underſtanding, nor counſel againſt the LORD."

So likewiſe all that wiſdom which only conſiders and regards this ſhort life, and the narrow concernments of it, and makes proviſion only for our welfare in this world; and therefore can only be tempted with the hopes of temporal advantages, and terrified only with the danger of temporal evils and ſufferings; but hath no ſenſe of an immortal ſpirit within us, no proſpect of a life after death, no conſideration of a happy or miſerable eternity, of rewards and puniſhments, infinitely greater than all the temptations and terrors of time and ſenſe; I ſay, all this is a prepoſterous and pernicious wiſdom, and proceeds upon a falſe ſuppoſition, and a quite contrary ſcheme of things to what really is; and conſequently our whole life, and all the deſigns and actions of it do run upon a perpetual miſtake, and a falſe ſtating of our own caſe; and whatever we do purſuant to this miſtake is fooliſh and hurtful, and ſo far from conducing to our true intereſt, that it is all either beſides it, or contrary to it; becauſe we act upon a ſuppoſal only of this life, and a being only in this world, and that there is nothing either to be feared or hoped for beyond it; and being thus groſly miſtaken, we ſet our hearts only upon temporal things, and ſtudy our preſent ſecurity and ſatisfaction, and in all our counſels and actions are ſwayed only by the conſideration of temporal good and evil, of the preſent eaſe and pleaſure, the diſturbance and pain of

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our fleſhly and ſenſual parts; without any ſenſe of our own immortality and of that everlaſting ſtate which remains for us in another world.

But there is (my brethren) moſt certainly, there is another life after this; we are not beaſts, if we do not make ourſelves ſo; and if we die, we ſhall not die like them, neither ſhall our laſt end be like theirs. For whatever we may think or wiſh, it ſhall not be in our power to extinguiſh our own beings when we have a mind to be rid of them, and to chooſe whether or no we ſhall live for ever.

And if this be a falſe ſcheme of things which we have framed to ourſelves, and proceeded upon (as undoubtedly it is) then our whole life is one great error, and a perpetual miſtake, and we are quite wrong in all that we deſign to do. Our wiſdom hath begun at the wrong end, and we have made a falſe calculation and account of things, and have put our caſe otherwiſe than it is; and the farther we proceed upon this miſtake, our miſcarriage will be ſo much the more fatal in the iſſue. But if our wiſdom begin at the right end, and our caſe be truly ſtated, that GOD hath put into theſe frail and mortal bodies of ours, immortal ſpirits that ſhall live for ever; and hath ſent us into this world to ſojourn here for a little while, and to be diſciplined and trained up for eternity; and that after a ſhort proof and trial of our obedience, we ſhall be tranſlated into an everlaſting ſtate of unſpeakable happineſs or miſery, according as we have demeaned ourſelves in this world; if we believe this to be truly our caſe, our intereſt is then plainly before us, and we ſee where our happineſs lies, and what remains for us to do,

do, in order to the obtaining of it, and what we are to expect to ſuffer if we do it not. SERM. XCVI.

Now this foundation being laid, it is evident, that the beſt thing we can do for ourſelves, is to provide for our future ſtate, and to ſecure the everlaſting happineſs of another life. And the beſt way to do that, is to live in obedience to thoſe laws which our maker and our ſovereign hath preſcribed to us; and according to which he will one day ſentence us to eternal rewards or puniſhments.

It is evident likewiſe, that all our ſenſual appetites and deſires are to be bounded by the rules of reaſon and virtue, which are the laws of GOD; and that no preſent eaſe and pleaſure, trouble and ſuffering, are to be conſidered and regarded by us, in competition with the things which are eternal; and that ſin is of all other the greateſt evil, and moſt miſchievous to our main intereſt, and therefore with all poſſible care to be avoided; and that the favour of GOD is to be ſought, and the ſalvation of our ſouls to be provided for at any pains and expence whatſoever, and even with the hazard and loſs of our deareſt intereſts in this world, yea and of life itſelf.

And now if this matter hath been rightly ſtated, then religion, and the fear of GOD, is the firſt principle and foundation of true wiſdom, and that which we are to conſider, and take along with us in all the deſigns and actions of our lives, and all wiſdom which does not begin here, is prepoſterous, and will prove folly in the iſſue.

Secondly, as religion is the beginning of wiſdom, ſo it is the perfection of it, it is the higheſt point of wiſdom in which we can be inſtructed. "The fear

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" of the LORD (ſays Solomon, Prov. xv. 33.) is the " inſtruction of wiſdom." " A good underſtanding " (ſays David, Pſal. cxi. 10.) have all they that do " his commandments." The practice of religion is the perfection of wiſdom; and he underſtands himſelf beſt, who lives moſt according to the Laws of GOD. And this I might ſhew, by inſtancing in particular virtues, the practice whereof is much wiſer, and every way more for our intereſt, than the contrary vices; but this is too large an argument to engage in, and therefore I ſhall content my ſelf at preſent, briefly to ſhew, that the chief characters and properties of wiſdom do all meet in religion, and agree to it.

The firſt point of wiſdom is to underſtand our true intereſt, and to be right in our main end; and in this, religion will beſt inſtruct and direct us. And if we be right in our main end, and true to the intereſt of it, we cannot miſcarry; but if a man miſtake in this, he errs fatally, and his whole life is vanity and folly.

Another property of wiſdom is to be ſteady and vigorous in the proſecution of our main end, to oblige us hereto, religion gives us the moſt powerful arguments, the glorious happineſs, and the diſmal miſery of another world.

The next point of wiſdom is, to make all things ſtoop, and become ſubſervient to our main end. And wherever religion bears ſway, it will make all other things ſubordinate to the ſalvation of our ſouls, and the intereſts of our everlaſting happineſs; as the men of this world make every thing to ſubmit and give way to their covetous, and ambitious, and ſenſual deſigns.

Another part of wiſdom is to conſider the future, and to look to the laſt end and iſſue of things. It is

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a common folly among men, to be ſo intent upon the preſent as to have little or no regard to the future, to what will be hereafter. Men deſign and labour for this preſent life, and their ſhort continuance here in this world, without taking into ſerious conſideration their main duration, and their eternal abode in another world. But religion gives us a clear proſpect of a life after death, and overlooks time, and makes eternity always preſent to us, and minds us of making timely proviſion and preparation for it. It takes into conſideration our whole duration, and inſpires us with wiſdom, to look to the end of things, and to what will be hereafter, as well as to what is preſent.

It is likewiſe a great property of wiſdom, to ſecure the main chance, and to run no hazard in that. And this religion directs us to take care of, becauſe the neglect of it will prove fatal.

Another mark of wiſdom is, to lay hold of opportunities, thoſe eſpecially, which, when they are once paſt, will never return again. There are ſome ſeaſons wherein great things may be done, which if they be let ſlip, are never to be retrieved. A wiſe man will lay hold of theſe, and improve them; and religion inculcates this principle of wiſdom upon us, that this life is the opportunity of doing great things for ourſelves, and of making ourſelves for ever; this very day and hour may, for ought we know, be the laſt and only opportunity of repentance, and making our peace with GOD: therefore "to day, whilſt it is "called to day," let us ſet about this neceſſary work, "leſt any of us be hardned through the deceitfulneſs "of ſin;" to-morrow it may to be too late to begin

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it, and the justice of God may cut us off whilst we are wilfully delaying it; and the opportunities of saving our immortal souls, may vanish, and be for ever hid from our eyes.

The next property of wisdom, is to foresee dangers, and to take timely care to prevent them. "The "prudent man (saith Solomon) foreseeth the evil, and "hideth himself;" that is, shelters and secures himself against it; "but the simple pass on, and are punished;" that is, the evil overtakes them, and their folly is punished in their fatal ruin. Now the greatest danger is from the greatest power; even from "him who "is able to save and to destroy;" "I will tell you "(says the wisdom of God) whom ye shall fear; fear "him, who after he hath killed, can destroy both "body and soul in hell."

Again, another main point of wisdom, is to do as little as we can to be repented of, trusting rather to the wisdom of prevention, than to that of remedy. Religion first teacheth men innocency, and not to offend; but in case we do, (as "in many things we "offend all") it then directs us to repentance, as the only remedy. But this certainly is folly, to sin in hopes of repentance, that is, first to make work for repentance, and then run the hazard of it; for we may certainly sin, but it is not certain that we shall repent. And if it were, yet it is great folly to lay in beforehand, and to make work for trouble; *ne tu stultus homunicio es, qui malis veniam precari, quàm non peccare*, was a wise saying of old Cato; "thou art (says he) a "silly man indeed, who chooseſt rather to ask for- "giveness, than not to offend." If a man had the best remedy in the world, he would not make himself

ſelf ſick to try the virtue of it; and it is a known compariſon, and a very fit one, that repentance is *tabula poſt naufragium*, "a plank after ſhipwreck;" but I am greatly afraid that thouſands of ſouls who have truſted to it, have periſhed before they could get to land, with this plank in their arms. SERM. XCVI.

The laſt character of wiſdom I ſhall mention is, in all things to conſult the peace and ſatisfaction of our own minds, without which nothing elſe can make us happy; and this obedience to the laws of GOD does naturally procure. "Great peace have they (ſays "David) that love thy law, and nothing ſhall offend "them." "The work of righteouſneſs," ſays the prophet, "ſhall be peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs, "quietneſs, and aſſurance for ever." The fear of GOD, and the keeping of his commandments, is the beſt preſervative againſt the troubles of a guilty conſcience, and the terrifying apprehenſions of a future judgment. And this is the great wiſdom of religion, that whoſoever liveth according to the rules and precepts of it, prevents the chief cauſes of diſcontent, and lays the ſureſt foundation of a perpetual ſatisfaction of mind, a jewel of ineſtimable price, which none knows but he that has it; and he that hath it, knows the value of it too well to part with it for "the pleaſures of ſin, which are but for a "ſeaſon," and which always prove "bitterneſs in "the end" and for the little ſweetneſs which they yielded, leave a terrible ſting behind them.

Thus have I briefly repreſented the reaſonableneſs and wiſdom of religion. It is of infinite perfection, and of a vaſt influence and extent, it reacheth to the whole man, the happineſs of ſoul and body; and to

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our whole duration, the happiness of this world and the next; for "godliness (that is, true religion and "piety) hath the promise of this life, and of that "which is to come."

But now where are the effects of true religion, in the full compass and extent of it, to be found? such real effects as do in any measure bear a proportion to the power and perfection of their cause? for nothing certainly is more excellent and amiable in its definition than true religion is; but, alas! how imperfect is it in the subject? I mean in us, who ought to shew forth the power and perfection of it, in the practice and actions of our lives, the best demonstration of the excellent frame and temper of our minds.

What a conflict and struggling do the best men find between their inclination and their duty? how hard to reconcile our practice and our knowledge, and to make our lives to agree with the reason of our minds, and the clear conviction of our consciences? how difficult for a man in this dangerous and imperfect state, to be in any measure either so wise or so good as he ought? how rare is it for man to be good-natur'd, gentle and easy to be intreated, without being often betray'd into some weakness and sinful compliances, especially in the bad company of our betters? how next to impossible is it to be strict and severe in our lives, without being sour? to govern our lives with that perpetual caution, and to maintain that evenness of temper, as not to be sometimes peevish and passionate? and when we are so, not to be apt to say with Jonah, "we do well to be angry?"

There are two precepts in the new testament, that seem to me to be the nicest of all other, and hardest

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to be put in practice. One is that of our blessed SAVIOUR, "be wise as serpents, and innocent as doves." how hard is it to hit upon the just temper of wisdom and innocency; to be wise, and hurt no body; to be innocent, without being silly? the other is, that of the apostle, "be angry and sin not." How difficult is this, never to be angry but upon just cause? and when the cause of our anger is just, not to be transported beyond due bounds, either as to the degree of our anger, or as to the duration and continuance of it; this is so very nice a matter, that one would be almost tempted to think that this were in effect a prohibition of anger in any case; "be ye angry, and sin "not;" be ye so, if ye can without sin. I believe whosoever observes it, will find that it is as easy to suppress this passion at any time, as to give way to it, without offending in one kind, or other. But to proceed, SERM. XCVI.

How hard a matter is it, to be much in company, and free in conversation, and not to be infected by it? to live in the midst of a wicked world, and yet to keep ourselves free from the vices of it? to be temperate in the use of things pleasing, so as neither to injure our health, nor to lose the use of our reason, nor to offend against conscience? to fast often, without being conceited of it, and bargaining as it were with GOD for some greater liberties in another kind; and without censuring those who do not tie up themselves to our strict rules either of piety or abstinence? when perhaps they have neither the same opportunities of doing it, nor the same reason to do it that we have; nay perhaps have a much better reason for not doing just as we do: for no

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man is to prescribe to others his own private method, either of fasting, or of devotion, as if he were the rule, and his example a kind of proclamation, enjoining all his neighbours the same days of fasting and prayer which he himself, for reasons best known to himself, thinks fit to observe.

And then how hard is it to be chearful without being vain? and grave and serious, without being morose? to be useful and instructive to others, in our conversation and discourse, without assuming too much authority to our selves? which is not the best and most effectual way of doing good to others; there being something in the nature of man, which had rather take a hint and intimation from another, to advise himself, and would rather choose to imitate the silent good example which they see in another, than to have either his advice or his example imposed upon them.

How difficult it is to have a mind equal to every condition, and to be content with mean and moderate things? to be patient in adversity, and humble in prosperity, and meek upon sudden and violent provocations? to keep our passions free from getting head of our reason, and our zeal from out-running our knowledge? to have a will perfectly submitted and resigned to the will of GOD, even when it lies cross and thwart to ours, so that whatever pleases GOD, should please us? to be resolute, when our duty happens to be difficult and dangerous; or even to believe that to be our duty (tho' it certainly be so) which is very inconvenient for us to do? to hold out and be unwearied in well-doing? to be careful to preserve our lives, and yet upon a great occasion,

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and whenever GOD calls for them, to be content to lay them down? SERM. XCVI.

To be wiſe and innocent; "men in underſtanding," and yet "in malice children?" to have many great virtues, and not to want that which gives the great luſtre to them all, I mean real and unaffected modeſty, and humility? In ſhort,

How difficult is it, "to have regard to all GOD's "commandments, and to hate every evil and falſe "way?" to have our duty continually in our eye, and ready to be put into practice upon every proper occaſion? to have GOD, and the conſideration of another world always before us, preſent to our minds, and operative upon our practice? to live as thoſe that know they muſt die, and to have our thoughts perpetually awake, and intent upon the great and everlaſting concernments of our immortal ſouls?

Theſe are great things indeed, eaſy to be talked of, but hard to be done; nay not to be done at all, without frequent and fervent prayer to GOD, and the continual aids and ſupplies of his grace; not without an earneſt endeavour on our parts, a vigorous reſiſtance of temptations, and many a ſore conflict with our own perverſe wills and ſenſual inclinations; not without a perpetual guard and watchfulneſs over our lives, and our unruly appetites and paſſions.

Little do unexperienced men, and thoſe who have taken no great pains with themſelves, imagine what thought and conſideration, what care and attention, what reſolution and firmneſs of mind, what diligence and "patient continuance in well-doing,"

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are requisite to make a truly good man; such a one as St. Paul describes, that is, "perfect and entire, "and wanting nothing;" that "follows GOD "fully;" and fulfils every part of his duty, "having a conscience void of offence towards GOD, and "towards man." Who is there among us, that is either wise enough for his own direction, or good enough for the peace and satisfaction of his own mind; that is so happy as to know his duty, and to do it; as to have both the understanding and the will to do in all things as he ought?

After our best care, and all our pains and endeavours, the most of us will still find a great many defects in our lives, and cannot but discern great and manifold imperfections in our very best duties and services; insomuch that we shall be forced to make the same acknowledgment concerning them, which Solomon does concerning the imperfection of all things under the sun; "that which is crooked can-"not be made straight, and that which is wanting "cannot be numbred." And when all is done, we have all of us reason to say, not only that "we are "unprofitable servants, having done nothing but "what was our duty to do;" but have cause likewise, with great shame and confusion of face, to acknowledge that we have been in many respects "wicked and slothful servants," and so very far from having done what was "our duty to do," that the greatest part of the good which the most of us have done, is the least part of the good which we might and ought to have done.

The practice of religion, in all the parts and instances of our duty, is work more than enough for the

the best and greatest mind, for the longest and best order'd life, "the commandment of GOD is exceeding broad;" and an obedience in any good measure equal to the extent of it, extremely difficult. And after all, as the man in the gospel said with tears to our SAVIOUR, concerning the weakness of his own faith, "LORD, I believe, help thou my unbelief," Mark ix. 24. So the best of men may say, and say it with tears too, concerning every grace and virtue wherein they excel most, "LORD, I aspire, I endeavour "after it, be thou pleased to assist my weakness, and "to help me by thy grace continually to do better."

The sum of all is this, if we be careful to do our best, and make it the constant and sincere endeavour of our lives to please GOD, and to keep his commandments, we shall be accepted of him: for GOD values this more than "whole burnt-offerings "and sacrifices," more than "thousands of rams, "and ten thousands of rivers of oil;" because this is an essential part of religion, "to love GOD with all "our hearts, and minds, and strength, and to love "our neighbours as our selves." The duties comprehended in these two great commandments, sincerely practised by us (though with a great deal of imperfection) will certainly be acceptable in the sight of GOD, in and through the merits and mediation of JESUS CHRIST the righteous. "Blessed are "they" (saith St. John very plainly, in the conclusion of that obscure book of his Revelation) "blessed "are they that do his commandments, that they "may have right to the tree of life," Rev. xxii. 14.

I speak now to a great many who are at the upper end of the world, and command all the plea-

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ſures and enjoyments of it; but the time is coming, and (whether we think of it or not) is very near at hand, when we ſhall "ſee an end of all perfection," and of all that is deſirable upon earth, and upon which men are apt to value themſeves ſo much in this world; and then nothing but religion, and the conſcience of having done our duty to GOD and man, will ſtand us in ſtead, and yield true comfort to us. When we are going to leave the world, how ſhall we then wiſh that we had made religion the great buſineſs of our lives; and in the day of GOD's grace and mercy, had exerciſed repentance, and made our peace with GOD, and prepared our ſelves for another world; that after our departure hence, we might be admitted into "the preſence of GOD, where is ful-"neſs of joy, and at whoſe right hand are pleaſures "for evermore."

Let no man therefore, of what rank or condition ſoever he be in this world, think himſelf too great to be good, and too wiſe to be religious, and to take care of his immortal ſoul, and his everlaſting happineſs in another world; ſince nothing but this will approve it ſelf to be true wiſdom at the laſt. All other things will have an end with this life; but religion and the fear of GOD is of a vaſt extent, and hath an influence upon our whole duration, and, after the courſe of this life is ended, will put us into the ſecure poſſeſſion of a happineſs which ſhall never have an end.

I will conclude this whole diſcourſe with thoſe words of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, "if ye know theſe "things, happy are ye if ye do them." "Which "thou, who art the eternal ſpring of truth and good-"neſs,

" nefs, grant that we may all know and do in this " our day, for thy mercies fake in JESUS CHRIST; " to whom, with the FATHER and the HOLY " GHOST, be all honour and glory, dominion and " power, now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON XCVII.

The nature and influence of the promifes of the gofpel.

2 PETER i. 4.

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promifes; that by thefe ye might be partakers of the divine nature.

SERM. XCVII. The firft fermon on this text.

THE connexion of thefe words with the former is fomewhat obfcure, but it feems to be this. The apoftle had in the verfe before faid, " that the divine power of CHRIST hath by " the knowledge of the gofpel given us all things " that pertain to life and godlinefs;" that is by the knowledge of the gofpel we are furnifh'd with all advantages which conduce to make men happy in the next life, and religious in this; and then it follows, " whereby are given unto us exceeding great and " precious promifes." whereby this feems to refer to the whole of the foregoing verfe; as if it had been faid, " CHRIST by the gofpel hath given to us all " things that conduce to our future happinefs; and " in order thereto, all things which tend to make " men holy and good." Or elfe life and godlinefs

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are, by a hebraiſm frequent in the new teſtament, put for a godly life. And then among all thoſe things which conduce to a godly life, the apoſtle inſtanceth in the promiſes of the goſpel which do ſo directly tend to make men "partakers of a divine nature."

In the handling of theſe words, I ſhall,

Firſt, conſider the promiſes here ſpoken of; "whereby are given unto us exceeding great and "precious promiſes."

Secondly, the influence which theſe promiſes ought to have upon us; "that by theſe ye might be made "partakers of a divine nature."

Firſt, we will conſider the promiſes which are here ſpoken of; "whereby are given unto us exceeding "great and precious promiſes." And becauſe the chief promiſes of the goſpel are here intended, I ſhall take occaſion from this text to handle the doctrine of the promiſes, which is frequently diſcours'd of in divinity, but not always ſo clearly ſtated. And to this purpoſe, it will be proper to take into conſideration theſe four things.

I. What the promiſes are which are ſpoken of; "whereby are given unto us promiſes."

II. Why they are ſaid to be ſo great and precious; "exceeding great and precious promiſes."

III. We will conſider the tenor of theſe promiſes.

IV. When men are ſaid to have a right to them, ſo as they may apply them to themſelves. Theſe four heads will comprehend what I have to ſay upon this argument.

I. What the promiſes are which the apoſtle here ſpeaks of; "whereby are given unto us promiſes." And no doubt, the apoſtle here intends thoſe great and excellent

excellent promiſes which CHRIST hath made to us in the goſpel. So that to ſatisfy our ſelves in this enquiry, we need only to conſider what are the prinpal promiſes of the goſpel. Now the great promiſes of the goſpel are theſe three. SERM. XCVII.

1. The promiſe of the free pardon and forgiveneſs of our ſins, upon our faith and repentance.

2. The promiſe of GOD's grace and HOLY SPIRIT to aſſiſt our obedience.

3. The promiſe of eternal life to reward it.

1. The promiſe of the pardon and forgiveneſs of our ſins, upon our faith and repentance. The goſpel hath made full and clear promiſes to this purpoſe; that if we believe the goſpel, and will forſake our ſins, and amend our wicked lives, all that is paſt ſhall be forgiven us, and that CHRIST died for this end, to obtain for us remiſſion of ſins in his blood. The light of nature, upon conſideration of the mercy and goodneſs of GOD, gave men good hopes, that upon their repentance GOD would forgive their ſins, and turn away his wrath from them. But mankind was doubtful of this, and therefore they uſed expiatory ſacrifices to appeaſe the offended deity. The Jewiſh religion allowed of no expiation, but for legal impurities, and involuntary tranſgreſſions, ſuch as proceeded from ignorance and inadvertency; but not for "ſins of preſumption," and ſuch as were committed "with an high hand." If men ſinn'd wilfully, there was no ſacrifice appointed by the law for ſuch ſins. But the grace of the goſpel juſtifies us from the greateſt ſins, upon our faith and ſincere repentance. So St. Paul tells the Jews, Acts xiii. 38, 39. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and "brethren,

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" brethren, that through this man is preached " unto you the forgiveneſs of ſins: and by him all " that believe are juſtified from all things, from " which ye could not be juſtified by the law of " Moſes." There was no general promiſe of pardon, nor way of expiation under the law; perfect remiſſion of ſins is clearly revealed, and aſcertain'd to us only by the goſpel.

2. Another great promiſe of the goſpel, is the promiſe of GOD's grace and HOLY SPIRIT to aſſiſt our obedience. Our bleſſed SAVIOUR hath promiſed, " that our heavenly FATHER will give his HOLY " SPIRIT to them that ask him." 'Tis true indeed, there was a peculiar promiſe of the HOLY GHOST to the apoſtles and chriſtians of the firſt ages, which is not now to be expected; namely, an extraordinary and miraculous power, whereby they were qualified to publiſh the goſpel to the world, and to give confirmation to it. But now that the chriſtian religion is propagated and ſettled in the world, the great end and uſe of theſe miraculous gifts is ceaſed: but yet the SPIRIT of GOD doth ſtill concur with the goſpel, and work upon the minds of men, to excite and aſſiſt them to that which is good. And tho' this operation be very ſecret, ſo as we cannot give an account of the manner of it, yet the effects of it are very ſenſible, and this influence of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT is common to all chriſtians in all ages of the world. This propoſition is univerſally true, and in all ages and times; " if any man hath not the SPI- " RIT of CHRIST, he is none of his."

It muſt be acknowledged, that the SPIRIT doth not now work upon men in that ſudden and ſenſible manner,

manner, as it did in the firſt times of chriſtianity; SERM. XCVII.
becauſe then men were ſtrongly poſſeſs'd with the prejudices of other religions, which they had been brought up in; and therefore as more outward means of conviction were then neceſſary, ſo likewiſe a more powerful internal operation of the SPIRIT of GOD upon the minds of men, to conquer and bear down thoſe prejudices, and to ſubdue them to the obedience of faith. But now the principles of religion and goodneſs are more gradually inſtill'd into the minds of men, by the gentle degrees of pious inſtruction and education; and with theſe means the SPIRIT of GOD concurs in a more humane way, which is more ſuited and accommodated to our reaſon, and offers leſs violence to the nature of men. So that this promiſe of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT is now made good to us, as the neceſſity and circumſtances of our preſent ſtate do require. GOD does not uſe ſuch extraordinary means for the producing of thoſe effects, which may be accompliſh'd in a more ordinary way. The aſſiſtance of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT is ſtill neceſſary to men, to incline and enable them to that which is good; but not in that manner and degree that it was neceſſary at firſt: becauſe the prejudices againſt chriſtianity are not now ſo great, and many of thoſe advantages which were neceſſarily wanting at firſt, are now ſupplied in an ordinary way; and therefore it is not reaſonable now to expect the ſame extraordinary operation of the SPIRIT of GOD upon the minds of men, which we read of in the firſt beginning of chriſtianity.

3. There is likewiſe the promiſe of eternal life to reward and crown our obedience. And this the

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ſcripture ſpeaks of as the great promiſe of the goſpel, 1 John ii. 25. "This is the promiſe which he "hath promiſed us, even eternal life." And upon this account, the new covenant of the goſpel, is preferred before the old covenant of the law, becauſe it is "eſtabliſhed upon better promiſes." All the ſpecial and particular promiſes of the law were of temporal good things, and theſe were the great encouragements that were given to obedience, under that imperfect diſpenſation: but now "godlineſs hath not "only the promiſe of the life that now is, but of that "which is to come;" as the apoſtle tells us, 1 Tim. iv. 8. The goſpel hath clearly revealed to us a happy ſtate of immortality after this life, of which men had but very obſcure and doubtful apprehenſions. So the apoſtle tells us, 2 Tim. i. 10. "That it "is now made manifeſt, by the appearance of our "SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, who hath aboliſhed "death, and hath brought life and immortality to light "through the goſpel." Holy men had good hopes of it before; but they had no ſure, diſtinct apprehenſions of it, no ſuch full aſſurance concerning it, no ſuch clear and expreſs promiſes of it, as the goſpel hath given us.

Thus you ſee what thoſe great promiſes are which the goſpel hath given us, namely, the promiſe of the free pardon and forgiveneſs of our ſins, upon our faith and repentance; the promiſe of GOD's grace and HOLY SPIRIT to aſſiſt our obedience, and the promiſe of eternal life and happineſs to reward it. Theſe are the three eminent promiſes of the goſpel, and in all probability thoſe which the apoſtle here calls "great and precious promiſes," which brings me to the IId Thing

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IId Thing which I propounded to conſider, namely, why they are ſaid to be exceeding "great and pre- "cious," τὰ μέγιστα καὶ τίμια ἐπαγγέλματα, "the "greateſt and the moſt valuable promiſes." And to ſatisfy us that they are ſuch, the very conſideration of the bleſſings and benefits that they carry in them will be ſufficient: if we conſider the condition that mankind was in, when GOD was pleaſed to make theſe gracious declarations to us, we ſhall ſee great reaſon to ſet a high value upon every one of theſe promiſes. Mankind was extremely degenerated, "all "fleſh had corrupted its ways, and the whole world "was guilty before GOD," and liable to all that miſery which the ſinner had reaſon to apprehend from the incenſed juſtice of the Almighty. We had forfeited that happineſs to which our immortal nature was deſigned, and, which made our condition more ſad, we were "without ſtrength" to recover ourſelves out of it, by our repentance for what was paſt (if GOD would have accepted of it) and by our future obedience. Now the promiſes of the goſpel offer relief to us in all theſe reſpects, and thereby obviate all the difficulties and diſcouragements which mankind lay under.

The gracious promiſe of pardon frees us from guilt, and ſecures us from the terrible wrath of GOD, which our guilty conſciences did ſo much dread; and without this promiſe, mankind would have been under the greateſt doubts and diſcouragements. For when men are afraid their ſins are greater than will be forgiven them, they are apt to fall into deſpair, and deſpair is an effectual bar to repentance; for when men think their condition is deſperate, they care not what they do.

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And the promiſe of GOD's grace and HOLY SPIRIT, to aſſiſt and enable us to do our duty, does fully anſwer all the diſcouragements and objections from our own weakneſs, and the power of temptation. We may "do all things through CHRIST ſtrengthening "us;" and how weak ſoever we are of ourſelves, we are "ſtrong in the LORD, and in the power of his might." If GOD be for us, who or what can ſtand againſt us? The devil is a very powerful enemy, and much too ſtrong for fleſh and blood to encounter in its own ſtrength; but there is another principle in the world, which is mightier and more powerful than he, the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, who is always ready to help, when we do not repulſe and refuſe his aſſiſtance; "greater is "he that is in you, than he that is in the world," ſays the apoſtle, 1 John iv. 4. The SPIRIT of GOD dwells in all thoſe who are willing to admit him, and is ever ready to aſſiſt thoſe who comply with his bleſſed motions, and do vigouroufly put forth their own endeavours.

And then the promiſe of eternal life, that anſwers all the difficulties of our obedience, and ſets us above any thing that the world can threaten us withal, for our conſtancy to GOD, and his truth. A wiſe man will be content to ſuffer any thing, or to quit any thing, upon terms of far greater advantage: and what greater conſideration can be offered to encourage our conſtancy and obedience, than an eternity of happineſs? So that the apoſtle had reaſon to call theſe, "exceed-"ing great and valuable promiſes;" ſo valuable, that if any one of them had been wanting, our redemption and recovery had either been abſolutely impoſſible, or extremely difficult. I proceed to the

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IIId thing I propounded, which was to conſider the tenor of theſe promiſes; that is, whether GOD have made them abſolutely to us, without requiring any thing to be done on our part, or upon certain terms and conditions to be performed by us. That GOD may (if he pleaſe) make an abſolute promiſe of any bleſſing or benefit to us, there is no doubt; and that God's grace does prevent many, and is before-hand with them, is as little to be doubted: the SPIRIT of GOD goes along with the goſpel, moving and inclining men to yield obedience to it, many times before any inclination and diſpoſition thereto on their parts. But as to this promiſe of GOD's grace and HOLY SPIRIT, the great queſtion is not about the firſt motion of it, but the continuance of this aſſiſtance, and the increaſe of it; and this, I think, may ſafely be affirmed, is promiſed only conditionally, as alſo the pardon of ſin, and eternal life. And concerning each of theſe, the matter may quickly be decided, by plain texts of ſcripture.

Concerning the promiſe of the grace and aſſiſtance of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT, the ſcripture takes notice of two conditions. Firſt, that we beg it earneſtly of GOD: and this our SAVIOUR expreſſeth "by asking, "ſeeking, and knocking," which ſignifies the importunity of our requeſts; "our heavenly FATHER will "give his HOLY SPIRIT to them that thus ask it." And then, ſecondly, that we improve and make uſe of the grace which GOD affords us; "to him that "hath, ſhall be given, and from him that hath not, "ſhall be taken away even that which he ſeems to "have." That is (as appears plainly from the ſcope of the parable) to him that uſeth that grace, and

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those advantages which God affords him, more shall be given; but from him that makes no use of them, and therefore is as if he had them not, shall be taken away that which he but seems to have, because he makes no use of it.

Concerning the pardon of sins; the scripture plainly suspends that upon the general condition of repentance, and the change of our lives; "repent, "that your sins may be forgiven you:" and upon the condition of our forgiving others; "if ye for- "give men their trespasses, then will your heavenly "FATHER also forgive you; but if you forgive "not men their trespasses, neither will your FA- "THER forgive your trespasses," says our SAVIOUR, Matth. vi. 14, 15.

And then the promise of eternal life, is every where in scripture suspended upon the condition of faith and repentance, and perseverance in well-doing. "He that believes (says our SAVIOUR) shall be sa- "ved," which indeed implies the whole condition of the gospel. "He that believes," that is, he that effectually assents to the doctrine of CHRIST, and is so persuaded of the truth of it, as to live according to it, "shall be saved." But if obedience were not included in the scripture notion of faith, yet the scripture elsewhere expressly makes it the condition of our eternal salvation. Heb. v. 9. CHRIST is there said to be "the author of eternal salvation to them "that obey him;" thereby implying that none shall be saved by CHRIST, but those that obey the gospel. Heb. xii. 14. "Follow holiness, without "which no man shall see the LORD," Rom. ii. 7, 8, 9. "To them who by patient continuance in "well-

" well-doing ſeek for glory, and honour, and im- SERM.
" mortality," GOD will give " eternal life; but to XCVII.
" them that are contentious, and obey not the
" truth;" that is, the goſpel, " but obey unrigh-
" teouſneſs, indignation and wrath, tribulation and
" anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doth evil".

I cannot well imagine what can reaſonably be anſwered to ſuch plain texts; but I will tell you what is commonly anſwered; namely, that GOD gives the condition which he requires; and therefore though theſe promiſes run in a conditional form, yet in truth they are abſolute; becauſe he that makes a promiſe to another, upon a condition which he will alſo perform, doth in effect make an abſolute promiſe. As if a man promiſed another ſuch an eſtate, upon condition he pay ſuch a ſum for it, and does promiſe withal to furniſh him with that ſum, this in effect amounts to an abſolute promiſe of the eſtate.

And this is very well argued, if the caſe were thus. But GOD hath no where promiſed to work the condition in us, without the concurrence of our own endeavours. GOD may, and oftentimes doth, prevent men by his grace; but he hath no where promiſed to give his HOLY SPIRIT but to them that ask it of him. And he hath no where promiſed to continue his grace and aſſiſtance to us, unleſs we will uſe our ſincere endeavours; nay, in caſe we do not, he hath threatned to take away his grace and aſſiſtance from us. And if this be ſo, then the promiſes of the goſpel do not only ſeem to be conditional, but are really ſo. And it is a wonder that any man ſhould doubt of this, who conſiders how frequently in the new teſtament the goſpel is repreſented

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sented to us under the notion of "a covenant," since a covenant in the very nature of it doth imply a mutual obligation between the parties that enter into it. But if the gospel contain only blessings which are promised on GOD's part, without any thing required to be done and performed on our part, in order to the obtaining of those blessings, then the gospel is nothing else but a promise, or deed of gift, making over certain benefits and blessings to us; but can in no propriety of language in the world be called "a covenant:" but if there be some things required on our part, in order to our being made partakers of the promises which GOD hath made to us (as the scripture every where tells us there is) then the promises are plainly conditional. To instance in the promise of forgiveness of sins; "repent, that your sins may be blotted out;" that is, upon this condition that ye repent of your sins, they shall be forgiven, and not otherwise. Can there be any plainer condition in the world, than this in those words of our SAVIOUR? "If ye forgive men their "trespasses, your heavenly FATHER will also for-"give your trespasses; but if ye forgive not men "their trespasses, neither will your heavenly FA-"THER forgive your trespasses."

This is so far from being any prejudice to the freeness of GOD's grace, who is infinitely gracious in offering such great blessings to us upon any condition that we can perform; that it were one of the absurdest things in the world to imagine God should grant to men forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, let them behave themselves as they will.

IV. The last thing I proposed for the explaining of

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of this doctrine of the promiſes of GOD, was to conſider when men may be ſaid to have a right to theſe promiſes, ſo as to be able upon good grounds to apply them to themſelves: and the anſwer to this is very plain and eaſy; namely, when they find the conditions of theſe promiſes in themſelves; and not till then.

When a man hath truly repented of his ſins ſo as to forſake them, and lead a new life; and when he does from his heart forgive thoſe that have offended him, and hath laid down all animoſity againſt them, and thoughts of revenge; then hath he a right to the promiſe of pardon and forgiveneſs, and may apply to himſelf in particular what the ſcripture ſaith in general, "that GOD will blot out all his tranſgreſſions, and "remember his iniquities no more." When a man doth conſtantly and earneſtly implore the aſſiſtance of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT, and is ready to yield to the motions of it, and does faithfully make uſe of that ſtrength and aſſiſtance which GOD affords him, then he may expect the continuance of his grace, and further degrees of it. When a man makes it the conſtant and ſincere endeavour of his life, to pleaſe GOD, and "to walk in all the ordinances and command-"ments of the LORD blameleſs, and is effectually "taught by the grace of GOD to deny ungodlineſs "and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, and righte-"ouſly, and godly in this preſent world," then he may with comfort and joy "wait for the bleſſed "hope, and the glorious appearance of the great "GOD, and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST;" then he may with confidence depend upon GOD, "in "ſure and certain hope of that eternal life, which "GOD, that cannot lye, hath promiſed." When he

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can say with St. Paul, "I have fought a good fight, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," then he may likewise triumph, as he did, "hence-"forth there is laid up for me a crown of righteous-"ness, which God the righteous judge shall give me "in that day."

Upon these terms, and in these cases, men may upon good grounds apply to themselves these "ex-"ceeding great and precious promises" of the gospel; and so far as any man is doubtful and uncertain of the performance of the conditions which the Gospel requires, so far he must necessarily question his right and title to the blessings promised. And if any man think this doctrine too uncomfortable, and be willing to reject it upon this account, I shall only say this, that men may cheat themselves, if they please, but most certainly they will never find any true and solid comfort in any other. This is a plain and sensible account of a man's confidence and good hopes in the promises of God; but for a man to apply any promise to himself, before he finds the condition in himself, is not faith, but either fancy or presumption.

And therefore it is a very preposterous course which many take, to advise and exhort men, with so much earnestness to apply the promises of God to themselves, and to tell them that they are guilty of great unbelief in not doing it. That which is proper to exhort men to, is to endeavour to perform the condition upon which God hath promised any blessing to us; and when men find the condition in themselves, they will without any great persuasion take comfort from the promise, and apply it to themselves; but till they discern the condition in them-

themselves, it is impossible for a man that understands himself, to apply the promise to himself; for till the condition be performed, he hath no more right to the promise, than if such a promise had never been made. And 'tis so far from being a sin in such a man, to doubt of the benefit of such a promise, that it is his duty to do so; and no man that understands himself, and the promises of GOD, can possibly do otherwise. SERM. XCVII.

Therefore 'tis a vain and groundless trouble which perplexeth many people, that they cannot apply the promises of GOD to themselves; whereas the true ground of their trouble should be this, that they have not been careful to perform the condition of those promises which they would apply to themselves; the other is an endless trouble; let them but look to the condition, and the promise will apply it self. I speak all this on purpose to free men from those perplexities wherewith many have entangled themselves, by false apprehensions of the promises of GOD, either as if they were not made to us upon certain conditions to be performed by us, or as if any man could comfortably apply them to himself, before he hath performed those conditions upon which GOD hath made such promises. For if men will believe that which is not true, or expect things upon such terms as they are not to be had, they may trouble themselves eternally, and all the world cannot help it.

I have now done with the first thing I propounded to speak to, namely the promises which are here spoken of. The second thing, (*viz.*) what influence these promises ought to have upon us, "that by them we may "be partakers of the divine nature," I shall reserve to another opportunity.

SERMON XCVIII.

The nature and influence of the promiſes of the goſpel.

2 PETER i. 4.

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promiſes; that by theſe ye might be partakers of the divine nature.

SERM. XCVIII. The ſecond ſermon on this text.

I Made entrance into theſe words the laſt day, in the handling whereof I propoſed to do theſe two things.

Firſt, to conſider the promiſes here ſpoken of; "whereby are given unto us exceeding great and "precious promiſes."

Secondly, the influence which theſe promiſes ought to have upon us; "that by theſe ye might "be partakers of a divine nature."

The firſt of theſe I have done with, and proceed now to the

Second, viz. The influence which theſe promiſes ought to have upon us; "whereby are given unto "us exceeding great and precious promiſes, that by "theſe ye might be partakers of a divine nature." Not that we can partake of the eſſence and nature of GOD, as ſome have blaſphemouſly affirmed, pretending, in their canting and ſenſleſs language, to be "godded with GOD, and chriſted with CHRIST." In this ſenſe it is impoſſible for us to "partake "of the divine nature," for this would be for men to become gods, and to be advanced to the

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ſtate and perfection of the deity. But the word φύσις doth frequently in ſcripture ſignify a temper and diſpoſition; and to be "partakers of a divine "nature," is to be of a divine temper and diſpoſition, to have our corrupt natures rectified and purged from all ſinful luſts, and irregular paſſions, and from all vicious and corrupt affections; and therefore it follows in the text, "having eſcaped the corruption "that is in the world through luſt; and beſides this, "giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, "and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge "temperance, and to temperance patience, and to "patience godlineſs, and to godlineſs brotherly kind-"neſs, and to brotherly kindneſs charity." So that we are "made partakers of a divine nature," as the apoſtle here explains it, theſe two ways; by cleanſing ourſelves from the luſts of the fleſh, which the apoſtle here calls "the corruption or defilement which "is in the world through luſt;" and by a diligent endeavour after all chriſtian graces and virtues, faith and temperance, and patience, a ſincere love of the brethren, and an univerſal charity and good-will towards all men.

And that this is the proper influence and and efficacy of the great promiſes of the goſpel upon the hearts and lives of men, the apoſtle St. Paul fully declares to us, 2 Cor. vii. 1. "Having therefore theſe "promiſes, dearly beloved, let us cleanſe ourſelves "from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit;" that is, from the luſts of the fleſh and of uncleanneſs, and from all evil and corrupt affections of the mind, ſuch as wrath, envy, malice, hatred, ſtrife, revenge, cruelty, pride, and the like; "perfecting holineſs in the fear "GOD;"

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" GOD;" that is, continually aſpiring ſtill more and more after further degrees of holineſs, and virtue, and goodneſs, which are the great perfections of the divine nature. And thus by a conſtant and ſincere endeavour " to cleanſe ourſelves from all impurity of the fleſh " and ſpirit," and by practiſing all the virtues of a good life, we ſhall by degrees raiſe and advance ourſelves to a god-like temper and diſpoſition, imitating in all our actions the goodneſs, and mercy, and patience, and truth, and faithfulneſs of GOD, and all thoſe other perfections of the divine nature, which are comprehended under the term of holineſs. This is that which the apoſtle here calls " partaking of a " divine nature;" or, as our bleſſed SAVIOUR expreſſeth it, " to be perfect, as our FATHER which " is in heaven is perfect."

This the goſpel deſigns to raiſe us to; and one of the great inſtruments whereby this is effected, are thoſe "exceeding great and precious promiſes" which I have inſiſted upon: and they are capable of effecting it theſe two ways:

Firſt, by way of internal efficacy and aſſiſtance; and,

Secondly, by way of external motive and argument: both theſe ways ſome or other of theſe promiſes have a mighty influence upon us (if we be not wanting to ourſelves) to raiſe us to a god-like temper and diſpoſition, that is, to the greateſt perfection of virtue and goodneſs which we are capable of in this life.

Firſt, by way of internal efficacy and aſſiſtance. And this influence the promiſe of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT, and of his gracious help and aſſiſtance thereof,

of, hath upon the minds of men, inclining them to that which is good, and enabling them to do it. For the HOLY SPIRIT is promiſed to us, in conſideration and commiſeration of that impotency and weakneſs which we have contracted in that degenerate and depraved condition into which mankind is ſunk; to help us, who are "without ſtrength" to recover ourſelves out of that evil and miſerable ſtate into which by wilful tranſgreſſion we are fallen; "to "quicken us who are dead in treſpaſſes and ſins," (as the ſcripture expreſſeth the condition of unregenerate perſons) to "raiſe us to a new life," and to cheriſh this principle of ſpiritual life, which is commonly weak at firſt, and to carry it through all diſcouragements and oppoſitions; to excite us continually to our duty, and to enable us to the moſt difficult parts of obedience, ſuch as are moſt contrary to our natural inclinations, and againſt the grain of fleſh and blood, to bear down the ſtrength of ſin and temptation; and in all our conflicts with the world, and the fleſh, the devil, and all the powers of darkneſs, to make us victorious over them; and, in a word, to be a principle within us, more mighty and powerful than the luſts and inclinations of our evil hearts, than the moſt obſtinate and inveterate habits of ſin and vice, and than all the temptations and terrors of ſenſe. So that if we will make uſe of this aſſiſtance, and lay hold of this ſtrength which GOD affords us in the goſpel, and (as the apoſtle expreſſeth it) "be workers "together with GOD," we need not deſpair of victory and ſucceſs; for our ſtrength will continually increaſe, and the force and violence of our luſts will be abated, GOD will give us more grace, and we ſhall

"walk

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" walk from ſtrength to ſtrength, and our path will " be" (as Solomon ſays of the way of the righteous) " as the light which ſhines more and more unto the " perfect day."

For the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD conducts and manageth this great work of our ſanctification and ſalvation from firſt to laſt, by opening our hearts to let in the light of divine truth upon our minds, by repreſenting to us with advantage ſuch arguments and conſiderations as are apt to perſuade us to embrace it, and yield to it; by ſecret and gentle reprehenſions ſoftning our hard hearts, and bending our ſtiff and ſtubborn wills to a compliance with the will of GOD, and our duty. And this is that great work which the ſcripture calls our " regeneration, and ſanctification," " the turning us from darkneſs to light, and from " the power of ſatan unto GOD, a new creation, and " a reſurrection from the death of ſin, to the life of " holineſs." And then by leading and directing us in the ways of holineſs and obedience; by quickning our devotion, and ſtirring up in us holy deſires and diſpoſitions of ſoul, rendring us fit to draw near to GOD in prayer, with a due ſenſe of our own wants and unworthineſs, and an humble confidence in the goodneſs of GOD, that he will grant us thoſe good things that we ask of him; in ſupporting and comforting us in all our afflictions and ſufferings, eſpecially for truth and righteouſneſs ſake; and by ſealing and confirming to us the bleſſed hopes of eternal life. Thus the SPIRIT of GOD carries on the work of our ſanctification, and makes us " partakers of a " divine nature," by way of inward efficacy and aſſiſtance.

Secondly,

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Secondly, the promiſes of the goſpel are apt likewiſe to have a mighty influence upon us by way of motive and argument, to engage and encourage us "to "cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and "ſpirit, and to perfect holineſs in the fear of GOD." For,

Firſt, a full pardon and indemnity for what is paſt, is a mighty encouragement for us to return to our duty, and a forcible argument to keep us to it for the future. For ſince GOD, who hath been ſo highly injured and affronted by us, is ſo willing and ready to forgive us, as not only to provide and purchaſe for us the means of our pardon, by the grievous ſufferings of his dear SON, but to offer it ſo freely, and invite us ſo earneſtly to accept of it, and to be reconciled to him; the conſideration of this ought in all reaſon, ingenuity, and gratitude, to melt us into ſorrow and repentance for our ſins, and a deep ſenſe of the evil of them, and to inflame our hearts with a mighty love to GOD, and our bleſſed REDEEMER, "who hath loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his "own blood;" and to make us extremely unwilling, nay, moſt firmly reſolved never more to offend that merciful and gracious GOD, who is ſo ſlow to puniſh, and ſo forward to forgive; and effectually to engage us to a dutiful and conſtant and chearful obedience to GOD's holy laws and commandments, leſt by our wilful tranſgreſſion and violation of them, we ſhould run ourſelves into a deeper guilt, and aggravate our condemnation. Now that by the tender mercies of our GOD we are made whole, we ſhould be infinitely afraid "to ſin any more, leſt worſe things come "to us;" leſt we relapſe into a more incurable

5.

ſtate, and bring a heavier load of guilt and miſery upon ourſelves.

Secondly, the promiſe of GOD's grace and HOLY SPIRIT is likewiſe a very powerful argument and encouragement to holineſs and goodneſs, engaging us "to cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh "and ſpirit," that our ſouls and minds may be a fit temple for the HOLY GHOST, which will not dwell in an impure ſoul: and likewiſe encouraging us hereto, by this conſideration, that we have ſo unerring a guide to counſel and direct us, ſo powerful an aſſiſtant "to ſtrengthen us with all might in the in-"ner man," to ſtand by us in all our conflicts with ſin and ſatan, and make us (as the apoſtle expreſſeth it) "more than conquerors" over all our ſpiritual enemies. For tho' we be weak, and our luſts ſtrong, our enemies many, and temptations mighty and violent; yet we need not be diſheartned, ſo long as we know that "GOD is with us, and the grace of "his HOLY SPIRIT ſufficient for us," againſt all the ſtrength of ſin and hell; tho' our duty be hard, and our ſtrength ſmall, yet we cannot fail of ſucceſs, if we be ſure that the omnipotent grace of GOD is always ready to ſecond our ſincere, tho' never ſo weak, endeavours. So that when we ſee all the enemies of our ſalvation drawn up in array againſt us, we may encourage ourſelves, as the prophet Eliſha did his ſervant, when he told him, "that an hoſt com-"paſſed the city with horſes and chariots," and ſaid, "alas! my maſter, how ſhall we do?" And "he "anſwered, fear not, for they that be with us, are "more than they that be with them;" 2 Kings vi. 16. Or as Hezekiah comforted the people, when they were

were afraid of the mighty force of the king of Aſyria, 2 Chron. xxxii. 7, 8. "Be ſtrong and courageous, be not afraid, nor diſmayed for the king of "Aſſyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: "for there be more with us than with him. With "him is an arm of fleſh, but with us is the LORD "our GOD, to help us, and to fight for us." This is the caſe of every chriſtian; the force that is againſt us is finite and limited; but the almighty GOD is on our ſide, and fights for us; and every one of us may ſay with St. Paul, Phil. iv. 13. "I can do all "things through CHRIST which ſtrengthneth me."

Thirdly, the promiſe of eternal life and happineſs, if duly weighed and conſidered, hath a mighty force in it to take us off from the love and practice of ſin, and to encourage our obedience, "and patient conti-"nuance in well-doing." The aſſurance of enjoying unſpeakable and endleſs happineſs in another world, and of eſcaping extreme and eternal miſery, is a conſideration of that weight, as one would think could not fail of its efficacy upon us, to put all temptations to ſin out of countenance, and to bear down before us all the difficulties and diſcouragements in the way of our duty. And if this make no impreſſion upon us, if heaven and hell be of no weight with us, it will be in vain to uſe any other arguments, which in compariſon of this, are "but as the very ſmall "duſt upon the balance." For if on the one hand the hopes of perfect comfort and joy, and felicity, perpetual in duration, and vaſt beyond all imagination "ſuch as eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor "hath entred into the heart of man to conceive:" and if on the other hand, the dread of the terrible

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wrath of God, and of the vengeance of eternal fire, together with the insupportable torments of a guilty conscience, and the perpetual stings of bitter remorse and anguish for the wilful folly of our wicked lives, and the rage of horrible despair of ever getting out of so miserable a state; if neither of these considerations, if both of them will not prevail upon us "to cease "to be evil, and to resolve to be good," that we may obtain one of these conditions, and may escape the other; there is no hope that any words that can be used, any arguments and considerations that can be offered, should work upon us, or take place with us. He that is not to be tempted by such hopes, nor to be terrified by such fears, is proof against all the force of persuasion in the world.

And thus I have done with the two things which I proposed to consider from these words; the nature of these promises, and the influence they are apt, and ought to have upon us, to raise us to the perfection of virtue and goodness, which the apostle here calls our being "partakers of a divine nature." All that now remains is, to make some useful reflexions upon what hath been discoursed upon these two heads.

First of all, if we expect the blessings and benefits of these "exceeding great and precious promises" of the gospel, we must be careful to perform the conditions which are indispensibly required on our parts. It is a great mistake, and of very pernicious consequence to the souls of men, to imagine that the gospel is all promises on God's part, and that our part is only to believe them, and to rely upon God for the performance of them, and to be very confident

confident that he will make them good, tho' we do nothing elſe but only believe that he will do ſo. That the chriſtian religion is only a declaration of GOD's good-will to us, without any expectation of duty from us; this is an error which one could hardly think could ever enter into any who have the liberty to read the bible, and do attend to what they read, and find there. SERM. XCVIII.

The three great promiſes of the goſpel all are very expreſly contain'd in our SAVIOUR's firſt ſermon upon the mount. There we find the promiſe of bleſſedneſs often repeated; but never abſolutely made, but upon certain conditions, and plainly required on our parts; as repentance, humility, righteouſneſs, mercy, peaceableneſs, meekneſs, patience. Forgiveneſs of ſins is likewiſe promiſed; but only to thoſe that make a penitent acknowledgement of them, and ask forgiveneſs for them, and are ready to grant that forgiveneſs to others, which they beg of GOD for themſelves. "The gift of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT" is likewiſe there promiſed; but it is upon condition of our earneſt and importunate prayer to God. The goſpel is every where full of precepts, enjoining duty and obedience on our part, as well as of promiſes on GOD's part, aſſuring bleſſings to us; nay, of terrible threatnings alſo if we diſobey the precepts of the goſpel. St. Paul gives us the ſum of the goſpel in very few and plain words, declaring upon what terms we may expect that ſalvation which the goſpel offers to all men, Tit. ii. 11, 12, 13, 14. "The grace of GOD which "bringeth ſalvation hath appeared to all men; "teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs and worldly "luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and "godly

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" godly in this preſent world, looking for that bleſ-
" ſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great
" God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who
" gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from
" all iniquity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar
" people, zealous of good works." And then he adds, " theſe things ſpeak and exhort, and rebuke
" with all authority;" intimating, that tho' men were very averſe to this doctrine, it ought to be inculcated with great authority and earneſtneſs, and thoſe who oppoſed and deſpiſed it, to be ſeverely rebuked: and with great reaſon, becauſe the contrary doctrine does moſt effectually undermine and defeat the whole deſign of the chriſtian religion.

Secondly, from hence we learn, that if the promiſes of the goſpel have not this effect upon us, to make us " partakers of a divine nature," it is our own fault, and becauſe we are wanting to our ſelves. God is always ready to do his part, if we do not fail in ours. There is a divine power and efficacy goes along with the goſpel, to make way for the entertainment of it in the hearts of men, where they put no bar and obſtacle to it. But if men will reſiſt the motions of God's bleſſed Spirit, and quench the light of it, and obſtinately hold out againſt the force of truth; God will withdraw his grace and Holy Spirit from them. The goſpel would raiſe us to the perfection of all virtue and goodneſs, and the promiſes of it are admirably fitted to relieve the infirmities and weakneſs of humane nature, and " to renew us after the image
" of God, in righteouſneſs and true holineſs;" to take us off from ſin and vice, and to allure us to goodneſs,

neſs, and to aſſiſt and encourage us in the practice of it: but if we will not comply with the gracious deſign of GOD in the goſpel, and ſuffer theſe promiſes to have their due influence and efficacy upon us; we wilfully deprive our ſelves of all the bleſſings and benefits of it, "we reject the counſel of GOD againſt "our ſelves, and receive the grace of GOD in vain;" and by rejecting and deſpiſing his promiſes, we provoke him to execute his threatnings upon us. SERM. XCVIII.

Thirdly, and laſtly, if the promiſes of the chriſtian religion are apt in their own nature to work this great effect upon us, to make us like to GOD, and to bring us to ſo near a reſemblance of the divine perfections, to make us good and juſt, and merciful and patient, and "holy in all manner of converſation, to purge "us from our iniquities, and to make us a peculiar "and excellent people, zealous of good works;" I ſay, if this be the proper tendency of the goſpel, and the promiſes of it, how doth this upbraid the degenerate ſtate of the chriſtian world at this day, which does ſo abound in all kind of wickedneſs and impiety? ſo that we may cry out as he did, upon reading the goſpel; *profectò aut hoc non eſt evangelium*; *aut nos non ſumus evangelici*; "either this is not the goſpel which "we read, and the chriſtian religion which we pro-"feſs; or we are no chriſtians." We are ſo far from that pitch of goodneſs and virtue which the chriſtian religion is apt to raiſe men to, and which the apoſtle here calls the "divine nature," that a great part of us are degenerated into beaſts and devils, wallowing in abominable and filthy luſts, indulging ourſelves in thoſe deviliſh paſſions of malice and hatred, of ſtrife and diſcord, of revenge and cruelty, of ſedition and diſturbance

disturbance of the publick peace to that degree, as if the grace of GOD had never appeared to us to teach us the contrary. And therefore it concerns all those who have the face to call themselves christians, to demean themselves at another rate, and for the honour of their religion, and the salvation of their own souls, "to have their conversation as becometh "the gospel of CHRIST;" and by departing from the vicious practices of this present evil world, to do what in them lies to prevent the judgments of GOD which hang over us; or if they cannot do that, "to "save themselves from this untoward generation."

SERMON XCIX.

The support of good men, under their sufferings for religion.

1 PETER iv. 19.

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of GOD, *commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator.*

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The first sermon on this text.

THIS epistle was written by St. Peter, who was the apostle of the circumcision, to the dispersed Jews, who were newly converted to christianity; and the design of it it is to confirm and establish them in the profession of; and to instruct them how they ought to demean themselves towards the heathen, or gentiles, among whom they lived; and more particularly to arm and prepare them

them for thoſe ſufferings and perſecutions, which he foretels would ſhortly overtake them for the profeſſion of chriſtianity, that when they ſhould happen, they might not be ſurpriſed and ſtartled at them, as if ſome ſtrange and unexpected thing were come upon them; at the 12th verſe of this chapter, "beloved, think it not ſtrange concerning the fiery "trial which is to try you;" that is, do not wonder and be not aſtoniſh'd at it, "as if ſome ſtrange "thing happened unto you." SERM. XCIX.

And then he inſtructs them more particularly, how they ought to behave themſelves under thoſe trials and ſufferings, when they ſhould happen; not only with patience, which men ought to exerciſe under all kinds of ſufferings, upon what account and cauſe ſoever; but with joy and chearfulneſs; conſidering the glorious example and reward of them, ver. 13. "but rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of "CHRIST's ſufferings; that when his glory ſhall be "revealed, ye may be glad alſo with exceeding joy." And at the 14th verſe he tells them, that beſides the encouragement of ſo great an example, and ſo glorious a reward, they ſhould be ſupported and aſſiſted in a very extraordinary manner, by the SPIRIT of GOD reſting upon them in a glorious manner, as a teſtimony of the divine power and preſence with them; ver. 14. "If ye be reproached for the name "of CHRIST, happy are ye; for the SPIRIT of "glory and of GOD reſteth upon you;" or, as it is in the beſt copies, "for the SPIRIT of glory and of "power, even the SPIRIT of GOD reſteth upon "you;" that is, the glorious power of the divine SPIRIT is preſent with you, to comfort and bear up

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up your ſpirits under theſe ſufferings. But then he cautions them, to take great care, that their ſufferings be for a good cauſe, and a good conſcience; ver. 15. "But let none of you ſuffer as a murderer, or as thief, or as an evil-doer," (that is, as an offender in any kind againſt humane laws, made to preſerve the peace and good order of the world) "or as a buſy-body in other mens matters;" that is, as a pragmatical perſon, that meddles out of his own ſphere, to the diſquiet and diſturbance of humane ſociety: for to ſuffer upon any of theſe accounts, would be matter of ſhame and trouble, but not of joy and comfort; but if they ſuffered upon account of the profeſſion of chriſtianity, this would be no cauſe of ſhame and reproach to them; but they ought rather to give GOD thanks for calling them to ſuffer in ſo good a cauſe, and upon ſo glorious an account, verſe 16. "Yet if any man ſuffer as a "chriſtian" (if that be his only crime) "let him "not be aſhamed, but let him glorify GOD on this "behalf; for the time is come, that judgment muſt "begin at the houſe of GOD;" that is, the wiſe and juſt providence of GOD, hath ſo order'd it at this time, for very good reaſons and ends, that the firſt calamities and ſufferings ſhould fall upon chriſtians, the peculiar people and church of GOD, for their trial, and a teſtimony of the truth of that religion, which GOD was now planting in the world: "and "if it firſt begin at us," (that is, at us Jews, who were the ancient people of GOD, and have now embraced and entertained the revelation of the goſpel) "what ſhall the end be of them, that obey not the "goſpel of GOD?" (that is, how much more ſeverely

verely will GOD deal with the Jews who have crucified the SON of GOD, and ſtill perſiſt in their infidelity and diſobedience to the goſpel?) "and if the "righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the un- "godly and ſinner appear?" (that is, if good men be ſaved with ſo much difficulty, and "muſt "through ſo many tribulations enter into the king- "dom of God," what will become of all ungodly and impenitent ſinners? where ſhall they appear? how ſhall they be able to ſtand in the judgment of the great day?) from the conſideration of all which, the apoſtle makes this inference or concluſion, in the laſt verſe of this chapter, "Wherefore let them "that ſuffer according to the will of GOD, commit "the keeping of their ſouls to him in well-doing, as "unto a faithful creator."

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Thus you ſee the connexion and dependence of theſe words, upon the apoſtle's foregoing diſcourſe. I ſhall explain the ſeveral expreſſions in the text, and then handle the main points contained in them.

The expreſſions to be explained are theſe: what is meant by "thoſe that ſuffer according to "the will of GOD?" what by "committing the "keeping of our ſouls to GOD, as unto a faithful "creator:" and what by "well-doing?"

Firſt, what is meant by "ſuffering according to "the will of God?" this may be underſtood of ſuffering in a good cauſe, ſuch as GOD will approve: but this is not ſo probable; becauſe this is mentioned afterwards, in the following expreſſions of "com- "mitting the keeping of our ſouls to GOD in well- "doing;" that is, in ſuffering upon a good account: and therefore the plain and genuine ſenſe of this ex-

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preſſion ſeems to be this; that thoſe who according to the good pleaſure of GOD's will, and the wiſe diſpenſation of his providence, are appointed to ſuffer for his cauſe, ſhould demean themſelves ſo and ſo; "let them that ſuffer according to the will of God;" that is, thoſe whom GOD thinks fit to call to ſuffering. And this agrees very well with the like expreſſion, chapter iiid of this epiſtle, ver. 17. "For it is "better, if the will of GOD be ſo," (that is, if GOD have ſo appointed it, and think it fit) "that ye "ſuffer for well-doing than for evil-doing."

Secondly, what is here meant by "committing "the keeping of our ſouls to GOD, as to a faithful "creator?" that is, to depoſite our lives, and all that belongs to us, in a word, ourſelves, in the hands and cuſtody of his merciful care and providence who made us, and therefore we may be ſure will faithfully keep what we commit to him: for as we are his creatures, he is engaged to take care of us, and will not abandon the work of his own hands. Beſides that he hath promiſed to be more eſpecially concerned for good men, to ſupport them in their ſufferings for a good cauſe, and to reward them for it; and "he "is faithful that hath promiſed."

And therefore there is great reaſon and great encouragement, in all our ſufferings for God's cauſe and truth, to commit our ſouls to his care and cuſtody: our ſouls, that is (as I ſaid before) our lives, and all that belongs to us; in a word, ourſelves: for ſo the word ſoul is frequently uſed both in the old and new teſtament, Pſal. vii. 5. "Let the ene-"my perſecute my ſoul, and take it," that is, my life; for ſo it follows in the next words; "yea,

"let

"let him tread down my life upon the earth." And Pſal. liv. 3. "Oppreſſors ſeek after my ſoul." And Pſal. lix. 3. "they lie in wait for my ſoul;" that is, my life. And Pſal. xvi. 10, "Thou wilt not leave "my ſoul in hell," my ſoul; that is myſelf, thou wilt not ſuffer me to continue in the grave, and under the power of death, but wilt raiſe me up to life again. And ſo likewiſe in the new teſtament, Mark viii. 35. "Whoſoever will ſave his life, ſhall loſe it; "but whoſoever ſhall loſe his life for my ſake and the "goſpel's, the ſame ſhall ſave it." The ſame word which is here rendred life, in the very next verſe is rendred ſoul: "for what ſhall it profit a man, if he "ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul?" that is, his life. And ſo likewiſe John xii. 25. "He "that loveth his life, ſhall loſe it: and he that hat-"eth his life in this world," (in the original the word ſignifies ſoul) "he that hateth his life in this world;" (that is, who neglecteth and expoſeth his life in this world for the ſake of CHRIST) "ſhall keep it unto "life eternal." And Luke ix. 25. that which the other evangeliſt renders by the word ſoul, or life, he renders himſelf; "for what is a man advantaged, "if he gain the whole world, and loſe himſelf?" And ſo here in the text, "to commit the keeping "of our ſouls to GOD," is to commit ourſelves to his care and providence.

Thirdly, what is here meant by "committing our-"ſelves to him in well-doing?" By well-doing is here meant, a fixed purpoſe and reſolution of doing our duty, notwithſtanding all hazards and ſufferings; which is called by St. Paul, Rom. ii. 7. "a patient "continuance in well-doing." It ſignifies ſome-

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times acts of goodneſs and charity; but in this epiſtle it is taken in a larger ſenſe, for conſtancy and reſolution in the doing of our duty; as chap. ii. 15. "for "ſo is the will of GOD, that with well-doing" (that is, by a reſolute conſtancy in a good courſe) "ye may "put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men." And ver. 20. "But if when ye do well, and ſuffer "for it" (that is, if when ye ſuffer for well-doing) "ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with GOD." And chap. iii. ver. 6. "as long as you do well, "and are not afraid with any amazement;" that is, are reſolute and conſtant in your duty, notwithſtanding all threatnings and terrors. And ver. 17. "for it is "better, if the will of GOD be ſo, that ye ſuffer for "well-doing, than for evil-doing;" that is, for your religion and conſtancy in ſo good a cauſe, as chriſtiſtians, and not as criminals upon any other account.

So that the plain meaning of the words is, as if the apoſtle had ſaid, wherefore being forwarned of ſuffering and perſecution for the cauſe of religion, the ſum of my direction and advice upon the whole matter is this; that ſince it is the will of GOD that ye ſhould ſuffer upon this account, commit yourſelves in the conſtant diſcharge of your duty, and a good conſcience, to the particular care and providence of almighty GOD, and your faithful creator.

And now I come to handle the particular points contained in the words; and they are theſe three.

Firſt, that when men do ſuffer really and truly for the cauſe of religion, they may with confidence commit themſelves (their lives and all that is dear to them) to the particular and more eſpecial care of the divine providence.

Secondly,

Secondly, always provided, that we do nothing contrary to our duty, and a good conſcience; for this the apoſtle means, "by committing ourſelves to "GOD, in well-doing." If we ſtep out of the way of our duty, or do any thing contrary to it, GOD's providence will not be concerned for us, to bear us out in ſuch ſufferings.

Thirdly, I ſhall conſider what ground of comfort and encouragement the conſideration of GOD, as "a faithful creator," affords us in all our ſufferings, for a good cauſe, and a good conſcience.

Firſt, when men do ſuffer really and truly for the cauſe of religion, and GOD's truth, they may with confidence and good aſſurance commit themſelves, (their lives and all that is dear to them) to the particular and more eſpecial care of his providence. In the handling of this, I ſhall conſider theſe three things.

I. When men may be ſaid to ſuffer really and truly for the cauſe of religion; and when not.

II. How far they may rely upon the providence of GOD, to bear them out in theſe ſufferings.

III. What ground and reaſon there is to expect the more particular and eſpecial care of GOD's providence, in caſe of ſuch ſufferings.

I. When men may be ſaid to ſuffer really and truly for the cauſe of religion, and GOD's truth; and when not. In theſe caſes,

Firſt, when men ſuffer for not renouncing the true religion, and becauſe they will not openly declare againſt it, and apoſtatize from it. But it will be ſaid, that in all theſe caſes the queſtion is, what is the true religion? To which I anſwer; that all diſcourſes of this

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this nature, about suffering for religion, do suppose the truth of some religion or other. And among christians, the truth of the christian religion is taken for granted, wherever we speak of mens suffering persecution for it. And the plainest case among christians, is, when they are persecuted, because they will not openly deny and renounce the christian religion. And this was generally the case of the primitive christians; they were threatned with tortures and death, because they would not renounce JESUS CHRIST, and his religion, and give demonstration thereof, by offering sacrifices to the heathen gods.

Secondly, men do truly suffer for the cause of religion, when they are persecuted only for making an open profession of the christian religion, by joining in the assemblies of christians for the worship of GOD; tho' they be not urged to deny and disclaim it, but only to conceal and dissemble the profession of it, so as to forbear the maintinance and defence of it upon fitting occasions, against the objections of those who are adversaries of it. For to conceal the profession of it, and to decline the defence of it, when just occasion is offered, is "to be ashamed of "it," which our SAVIOUR interprets to be a kind of denial of it, and is opposed to "the confessing of "him before men," Matth. x. 32, 33. "Whoso-"ever shall confess me before men, him will I also "confess before my FATHER which is in heaven: "but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will "I also deny before my FATHER which is in hea-"ven." And this by St. Mark is express'd by "be-"ing ashamed of CHRIST;" that is, afraid and ashamed to make an open profession of him, and his religion;

religion; Mark viii. 38. "Whosoever therefore shall "be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adul- "terous and sinful generation, of him also shall the "Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the "glory of the FATHER, with his holy angels." SERM. XCIX.

And this likewise was the case of the primitive christians under the moderate emperors, when the persecution of them was not so hot, as to drive them to a denial of CHRIST, provided they would be contented to conceal and dissemble their religion, in that case they did not hunt them out, nor prosecute them to renounce their religion, if they made no discovery of themselves. But yet they who suffered, because they would not conceal their profession of christianity, did truly suffer for the cause of religion.

Thirdly, men do likewise truly suffer for the cause of religion, when they suffer for not betraying it, by any indirect and unworthy means; such as among the primitive christians was their delivering up their bibles to the heathen, to be burnt and destroyed by them: for to give up that holy book, which is the great instrument of our religion, is in effect to give up christianity itself, and consent to the utter extirpation of it.

And such likewise is the case of those, who suffer in any kind for not contributing to break down the fences of religion in any nation, where the providence of GOD hath given it a legal establishment and security; or, in a word, for refusing to countenance and further any design, which visibly tends to the ruin of religion: for to destroy religion, and to take away that which hinders the destruction of it, are in effect much the same thing.

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Fourthly, men do truly ſuffer for the cauſe of religion, when they ſuffer for the maintenance and defence of any neceſſary and fundamental article of it, tho' they be not required to renounce the whole chriſtian religion; for what St. Paul ſays of the article of "the reſurrection of the dead," is true of any other neceſſary article of the chriſtian religion, that the denial of it is a ſubverſion of the whole chriſtian faith; becauſe it tends directly to the overthrowing of chriſtianity, being a wound given to it in a vital and eſſential part. And this was the caſe of thoſe, who in any age of chriſtianity have been perſecuted by hereticks, for the defence of any article of chriſtianity.

And I cannot but obſerve by the way, that after the heathen perſecutions were ceaſed, perſecution was firſt begun among the chriſtians by hereticks; and hath ſince been taken up, and carried much beyond that bad pattern, by the church of Rome, which, beſides a ſtanding inquiſition in all countries, which are entirely of that religion; (a court, the like whereto, for the clancular and ſecret manner of proceeding, for the unjuſt and arbitrary rules of it, for the barbarous uſage of mens perſons, and the cruelty of its torments, to extort confeſſions from them, the ſun never ſaw erected under any government in the world, by men of any religion whatſoever) I ſay, which, beſides this court, hath by frequent croiſadoes for the extirpation of hereticks, and by many bloody maſſacres in France and Ireland, and ſeveral other places, deſtroyed far greater numbers of chriſtians, than all the ten heathen perſecutions; and hath of late revived, and to this very day continues in the ſame

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or greater cruelties, and a fiercer persecution of protestants, if all the circumstances of it be considered, than was ever yet practised upon them; and yet whilst this is doing almost before our eyes, in one of our next neighbour nations, they have the face to complain of the cannibal laws, and bloody persecutions of the church of England, and the confidence to set up for the great patrons of liberty of conscience, and enemies of all compulsion and force in matters of religion.

Fifthly, men do truly suffer for the cause of God and religion, when they suffer for asserting and maintaining the purity of the christian doctrine and worship; and for opposing and not complying with those gross errors and corruptions, which superstition and ignorance had, in a long course of time, brought into the christian religion. Upon this account many good people suffered in many past ages, for resisting the growing errors and corruptions of the church of Rome, which at first crept in by degrees, but at last broke in like a mighty flood, which carried down all before it, and threatned ruin and destruction to all that opposed them: Upon this account also, infinite numbers suffered among the Waldenses and Albigenses, in Bohemia, and in England, and in most other countries in this western part of christendom. And they who suffered upon this account, suffered in a good cause, and for the testimony of the truth.

Sixthly, and lastly, men do truly suffer for the cause of religion, when they suffer for not disclaiming and renouncing any clear and undoubted truth of God whatsoever; yea though it be not a fundamental point and article of religion.

And this is the caſe of thoſe many thouſands, who ever ſince the IVth council of Lateran, which was in the year 1215, (when tranſubſtantiation was firſt defin'd to be an article of faith, and neceſſary to ſalvation to be believ'd) were perſecuted with fire and ſword, for not underſtanding thoſe words of our SAVIOUR, "this is my body," (which are ſo eaſily capable of a reaſonable ſenſe) in the abſurd and impoſſible ſenſe of tranſubſtantiation. And though this diſowning of this doctrine, be no expreſs and direct article of the chriſtian religion; yet it is a fundamental article of right reaſon and common ſenſe: becauſe the admitting of tranſubſtantiation, does undermine the foundation of all certainty whatſoever, and does more immediately ſhake the very foundation of chriſtianity it ſelf. Yea, tho' the chriſtian religion were no ways concerned in this doctrine, yet out of reverence to reaſon and truth, and a juſt animoſity and indignation at confident nonſenſe, a man of an honeſt and generous mind would as ſoon be brought to declare or ſwear, that twice two do not make four, but five, as to profeſs his belief of tranſubſtantiation.

And tho' all truths are not of equal conſequence and concernment, yet all truth is of GOD; and for that reaſon, tho' we are not obliged to make an open profeſſion of all truths at all times, yet we are bound not to deny or renounce any truth, nor to make profeſſion of a known falſhood or error: for it is merely becauſe of the intrinſical evil of the thing, that, "it is impoſſible for GOD to lye;" and the SON of GOD thought it worth his coming into the world, and laying down his life, "to bear witneſs to the "truth." So he himſelf tells us, John xviii. 37.

To

" To this end was I born, and for this cause came SERM.
" I into the world, that I should bear witness to the XCIX.
" truth."

Thus have I shewn you in these plain instances (to which most other cases may be reduced) when men may be said to suffer truly for the cause of religion, and truth.

I shall mention two or three cases wherein men may seem to suffer for the cause of religion, but cannot truly be said to do so.

First, when men rashly expose themselves to danger, and run upon sufferings for the sake of religion. Thus several of the primitive christians voluntarily exposed themselves when they were not called in question, and in the heat of their affection and zeal for God and religion, offered themselves to martyrdom, when none enquired after them. This, in the gracious interpretation of God, who knowing the sincerity of their zeal, was pleased to overlook the indiscreet forwardness and rashness of it, might be accepted for a kind of martyrdom; but cannot in reason be justified, so as to be fit to be made a pattern, and to be recommended to our imitation. For though God may be pleased to excuse the weakness of a well-meaning zeal; yet he can approve nothing but what is reasonable.

To suffer chearfully for the cause of God and his truth, when he calls us " to fight this good fight of " faith, and to resist unto blood;" and when we are reduced to that strait, that we must either die for God and his truth, or deny them; to suffer, I say, in this case with courage and patience, is one of the noblest of all the christian virtues. But to be perfect

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volunteers, and to run ourselves upon sufferings, when we are not called to them, looks rather like "the sacrifice of fools;" which tho' GOD may mercifully excuse, and pardon the evil of the action, for the good meaning of it; yet he can never perfectly approve and accept of it. But I think there is little need now-a-days to caution men against this rashness; it is well if they have the grace and resolution to suffer when it is their duty, and when they are called to it.

Secondly, nor can men be truly said to suffer for the cause of religion, when they suffer not for their faith, but their fancy, and for the wilful and affected error of a mistaken conscience. As when men suffer for indifferent things, which in heat and passion they call superstition and idolatry? and for their own false opinions in religion, which they mistake for fundamental articles of the christian faith. In this case, their mistake about these things will not change the nature of them, nor turn their sufferings into martyrdom; and yet many men have certainly suffered for their own mistakes. For as men may be so far deluded, "as to think they do GOD good service, "when they kill his faithful servants;" so likewise may they be so far deceived, as to sacrifice their lives, and all that is dear to them, to their own culpable errors and mistakes. But this is zeal without knowledge, not "the wisdom which descends from above," but that which comes from beneath, and is like the fire of hell, which is heat without light.

Thirdly, and lastly; nor can men truly be said to suffer for the cause of GOD and religion, when they suffer for the open profession and defence of truths not

not necessary. For tho' a man be obliged to make an open profession of all fundamental and necessary truths; yet he is under no such obligation to make profession of truths not necessary at all times; and unless he be called to deny them, he is not bound either to declare or defend them; he may hold his peace at other times, and be silent about them, especially when the open profession of them will probably do no good to others, and will certainly do hurt to ourselves, and the zealous endeavour to propagate such truths will be to the greater prejudice of charity, and the disturbance of the publick peace of the church. SERM. XCIX.

It was a good saying of Erasmus (if we understand it, as I believe he meant it, of truths not necessary) *adeo invisæ sunt mihi discordiæ, ut veritas etiam contentiosa displiceat:* "I am (says he) so perfect a hater "of discord, that I am even displeased with truth, "when it is the occasion of contention." As a man is never to deny truth, so neither is he obliged to make an open profession of truths not necessary at all times; and if he suffer upon that account, he cannot justify it to his own prudence, nor have comfort in such sufferings; because he brings them needlessly upon himself; and no man can have comfort, but in suffering for doing his duty.

And thus I have done with the first thing I proposed to enquire into; namely, when men may be truly said to suffer for the cause of religion.

I proceed now to the

IId enquiry; namely, how far men may rely upon the providence of GOD, to bear them out in such sufferings?

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To which I answer; that provided we do what becomes us, and is our duty on our part, the providence of GOD will not be wanting on his part, to bear us out in all our sufferings for his cause, one of these three ways.

First, to secure us from that violent degree of temptation and suffering, which would be too strong for humane strength and patience; or,

Secondly, in case of such extraordinary temptation and trial to give us the extraordinary supports and comforts of his HOLY SPIRIT; or else,

Thirdly, in case of a temporary fall and miscarriage, to raise us up by repentance, and a greater resolution and constancy under sufferings. I shall speak severally to these.

First, either the providence of GOD will not be wanting to secure us from that violent degree of temptation and suffering, which would be too strong for humane strength and patience to bear. And this is a great security to good men against the fears of final miscarriage, after all their labours, and pains, and sufferings in a religious course, by being over-born at last by the assault of a very violent and powerful temptation. Not but that the best of men ought always to have a prudent distrust of themselves, so as to keep them from security; according to the apostle's caution and counsel, "be not high-minded but fear;" and "let him that stands, take heed lest he fall;" because 'till we come to heaven, we shall never be out of the danger and possibility of falling: but yet for all this, we may hope, by the sincerity and firmness of our resolution, under the usual influence of GOD's grace, "to acquit ourselves like men," in ordinary cases of temptation and suffering. And

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And to this end, we should represent to ourselves "those exceeding great and precious promises," which he hath made to good men, and his merciful providence, which continually watcheth over them, and steers their course for them in this world, among those many rocks which they are in danger to split upon; that he is able "to stablish us in the truth, and "to keep us from falling, to present us faultless "before the presence of his glory with exceeding "joy, and to preserve us to his heavenly kingdom;" and that if we do not forsake him, and forfeit his care and protection, he will "keep us by his mighty "power through faith unto salvation;" either by his merciful foresight and prevention of those temptations which would probably be too hard for us; or if he thinks fit they should befal us, by supporting us under them in an extraordinary manner.

For I doubt not, but that the best men do owe their security and perseverance in goodness, much more to the merciful providence of God, preventing the assaults of violent and dangerous temptations, than to the firmness and constancy of their own resolutions. For there are very few persons of so firm and resolute virtue, but that one time or other a temptation might assault them upon such a disadvantage, as would in all probability, not only stagger them, but bear them down. Now herein the providence of God towards good men is very remarkable, in securing them from those temptations which are too strong for them to grapple withal; like a kind and tender father, who, if he be satisfied of the dutiful disposition of his child towards him, will not try his obedience to the utmost, nor permit too

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ſtrong a temptation to the contrary to come in his way. So the pſalmiſt repreſents GOD's tender regard and conſideration of the frailty and infirmity of his children, Pſal. ciii. 13, 14. "Like as a father pitieth his children, ſo the LORD pitieth them that fear him: for he knoweth our frame, he remembreth that we are but duſt," that is, he conſidereth us as men, and deals with us accordingly. Provided we be ſincere, he will not ſuffer us to be ſet upon by temptations that are too big for us. And therefore our bleſſed SAVIOUR makes it one of the petitions of that excellent prayer, which he hath recommended to us; "lead us not into temptation;" that is, we ſhould every day beg of GOD, that his providence would keep us out of the way of great and dangerous temptations, as knowing that this will be a greater ſecurity to us, than any ſtrength and reſolution of our own.

Secondly, or in caſe of ſuch violent and extraordinary temptations, the providence of GOD will not be wanting to give us the extraordinary ſupport and comfort of his HOLY SPIRIT, to bear us up under them. The providence of GOD did take care of good men in all ages, and did afford comfort to them under great trials and ſufferings; but GOD never made ſo expreſs and general a promiſe of this, to all good men, as he hath done by the chriſtian religion. Never was ſo conſtant a preſence and influence of the divine SPIRIT vouchſafed and aſſured to men under any diſpenſation, as that of the goſpel; wherein the SPIRIT of GOD is promiſed to all that ſincerely embrace the chriſtian religion, to reſide and dwell in them; not only to all the purpoſes

poſes of ſanctification and holineſs, but of ſupport and comfort under the heavieſt preſſures and ſufferings. For which reaſon the goſpel is called "the "miniſtration of the SPIRIT;" and is upon this account ſaid to be more glorious than any other revelation which GOD had ever made to mankind. SERM. XCIX.

We are naturally apt to be very much diſheartned and caſt down at the apprehenſion of great ſufferings, from the conſideration of our own weakneſs and frailty; but the SPIRIT of CHRIST dwells in all true chriſtians, and the ſame glorious power, which raiſed up JESUS from the dead, works mightily in them that believe. St. Paul uſeth very high expreſſions about this matter, Eph. i. 19. "That ye "may know, (ſaith he, ſpeaking to all chriſtians) "what is the exceeding greatneſs of his power to "us-ward who believe, according to the working of "his mighty power, which he wrought in CHRIST "when he raiſed him from the dead, and ſet him "at his own right hand." So that every chriſtian is endowed with a kind of omnipotence, "being "able (as St. Paul ſpeaks of himſelf) to do and to en-"dure all things, thro' CHRIST ſtrengthning him." Of our ſelves we are very weak, and the temptations and terrors of the world are very powerful; but there is a principle reſiding in every true chriſtian that is able to bear us up againſt the world, and the power of all its temptations. "Whatſoever is born of "GOD (ſaith St. John) overcometh the world; for "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the "world." The HOLY SPIRIT of GOD which dwells in all true chriſtians, is a more powerful principle of reſolution, and courage, and patience, un-

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der the sharpest trials and sufferings, than the evil spirit which rules in the world is, to stir up, and set on, the malice and rage of the world against us. "Ye are of GOD, little children" (he speaks this to the youngest and weakest christians) "ye are of "GOD, little children, and have overcome; because "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in "the world." The malice and power of the devil is very great; but the goodness and power of GOD is greater. And therefore in case of extraordinary temptation, good men, by virtue of this promise of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, may expect to be born up and comforted in a very extraordinary and supernatural manner, under the greatest tribulations and sufferings for righteousness sake.

And this was in a very signal and remarkable manner afforded to the primitive christians, under those fierce and cruel persecutions to which they were exposed. And this may still be expected, in like cases of extraordinary sufferings for the testimony of GOD'S truth. "If ye be reproached (saith "St. Peter in this ivth chap. ver. 14) for the name "of CHRIST, happy are ye; for the SPIRIT of "glory and of GOD resteth upon you." The SPIRIT of GOD is here promised to strengthen and support all that suffer for the name of CHRIST, in a very conspicuous and glorious manner, according to that prayer of St. Paul, Col. i. 11. that christians might be "strengthened with all might, ac-"cording to GOD'S glorious power, unto all pati-"ence and long-suffering, with joyfulness." For when GOD is pleased to exercise good men with trials more than humane, and such sufferings as are beyond

beyond the common rate of humane ſtrength and patience to bear, he hath engaged himſelf to endue and aſſiſt them with more than humane courage and reſolution. So St. Paul tells the Corinthians, who had then felt the utmoſt rage of perſecution, 1 Cor. x. 13, "No temptation or trial hath yet "befallen you, but what is common to man;" that is, nothing but what is frequently incident to humane nature, and what by humane ſtrength, with an ordinary aſſiſtance of GOD's grace, may be grappled withal. But, in caſe GOD ſhall call you to extraordinary ſufferings, "he is faithful that hath promiſed, "who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above "that ye are able, but will with the temptation alſo "make a way to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear "it;" that is, as he hath ordered and appointed ſo great a temptation or trial to befal you, ſo he will take care that it ſhall have a happy iſſue, by enabling you to bear it, by affording you grace and ſtrength equal to the violence and power of the temptation. For as he is ſaid "to fall into temptation," that is conquered by it; ſo he is ſaid "to "get out of it, or eſcape it," who is enabled to bear it, and, in ſo doing, gets the better of it. And for this we may rely upon the faithfulneſs of GOD, who hath promiſed "that we ſhall not be tried "above our ſtrength;" either not above the ſtrength which we have, or not above the ſtrength which he will afford us in ſuch a caſe. SERM. XCIX.

And why then ſhould we be daunted at the apprehenſion of any ſuffering whatſoever, if we be ſecured that our comfort ſhall be increaſed in proportion to our trouble, and our ſtrength in propor-

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tion to the ſharpneſs and weight of our ſufferings? or elſe,

Thirdly, in caſe of temporary falling, the providence and goodneſs of GOD will give them the grace and opportunity of recovering themſelves from their fall by repentance. For the providence of God may ſometimes, for wiſe ends and reaſons, ſee it fit to leave good men to their own frailty, and to faint and fall ſhamefully under ſufferings, ſo as to renounce and deny the truth; ſometimes to puniſh their vain confidence in themſelves, as in the caſe of Peter, who declared more reſolution, and bore it out with a greater confidence than any of the diſciples, when he ſaid to our SAVIOUR, "tho' all men forſake thee, "yet will not I;" and yet after this he fell more ſhamefully than any of the reſt, ſo as to deny his maſter with horrid oaths and imprecations, and this, tho' our SAVIOUR had prayed particularly for him, "that his faith might not fail." From which inſtance we may learn, that GOD doth not engage himſelf abſolutely to ſecure good men from falling, in caſe of a great temptation and trial; but if they be ſincere, he will not permit them to fall finally, though he may ſuffer them to miſcarry grievouſly for a time, to convince them of the vanity of their confidence in themſelves and their own ſtrength.

Sometimes GOD may ſuffer good men to fall, in order to their more glorious recovery, and the greater demonſtration and triumph of their faith and conſtancy afterwards; which was the caſe of that happy inſtrument of our reformation here in England, archbiſhop Cranmer, who after he had been ſo great a champion of the reformation, was ſo overcome with

with fear, upon the apprehenſion of his approaching ſufferings, as to ſubſcribe thoſe errors of the church of Rome, which he had ſo ſtoutly oppoſed a great part of his life: but he did not long continue in this ſtate, but by the grace of GOD, which had not forſaken him, was brought to repentance; and when he came to ſuffer, gave ſuch a teſtimony of it, and of his faith and conſtancy, as was more glorious, and more to the confirmation of the faith of others, than a ſimple martyrdom could have been, if he had not fallen; for when he was brought to the ſtake he put his right hand (with which he had ſigned the recantation) into the fire, and with an undaunted conſtancy held it there, till it was quite burnt, for a teſtimony of his true repentance for that foul miſcarriage; and when he had done, gave the reſt of his body to be burnt, which he endured with great courage and chearfulneſs to the laſt. So that he made all the amends poſſible for ſo great a fault; and the goodneſs of GOD, and the power of his grace was more glorified in his repentance and recovery, than if he had never fallen. SERM. XCIX.

But what ſhall we ſay, when notwithſtanding theſe promiſes of extraordinary comfort and ſupport, in caſe of extraordinary ſufferings, ſo great numbers are ſeen to faint in the day of trial, and to fall off from their ſtedfaſtneſs? of which there were many ſad inſtances, among the primitive chriſtians, and have likewiſe been of late in our own times, and in places nearer to us. This I confeſs is a very melancholy conſideration, but yet I think is capable of a ſufficient anſwer.

And

SERM. XCIX.

And first of all, let this be established for a firm and undoubted principle, "that GOD is faithful to "his promise;" and therefore we ought much rather to suppose in all these cases, that there is some default on our part, than any failure and unfaithfulness on GOD's part. Thus St. Paul determines in a like case, when the promise of GOD seemed not to be made good to the Jews, he lays the blame of it on their unbelief, but acquits GOD of any unfaithfulness in his promise, Rom. iii. 3, 4. "For what if some "did not believe, shall their unbelief make the faith "(or fidelity) of GOD without effect? GOD forbid: "yea, let GOD be true, but every man a liar." This I confess does not answer the difficulty; but yet it ought to incline and dispose us, to interpret what can fairly be offer'd for the removal of it, with all the favour that may be on GOD's side. I say then,

Secondly, that when good men fall in case of extraordinary temptation, and recover again by repentance, and give greater demonstration afterwards of their constancy and resolution, in the cause of GOD and his truth, the faithfulness of GOD in his promises is sufficiently vindicated, as in the cases I mentioned; because the promise of GOD is not absolute, that good men should be preserved from falling; but that "the temptation shall have a happy issue," and that they shall not finally miscarry. For promises of this nature are to be interpreted by us, and understood as we do our SAVIOUR's prayer for Peter before his fall, "that his faith should not fail finally;" but though he fell through too much confidence in himself, he should through the grace of GOD assisting him be enabled to recover by repentance.

Thirdly,

SERM. XCIX.

Thirdly, the ſincerity or inſincerity of men in the profeſſion of the true religion, is a thing which we cannot certainly know, becauſe we do not ſee into mens hearts; but "he who knows the heart, and tries "the ſpirits of men in a balance," cannot be deceived in this matter; and where men are not ſincere, the promiſe of GOD is not concerned to hinder them from diſcovering themſelves; and the fall of ſuch perſons, is no reflexion upon the faithfulneſs of GOD. And it is reaſonable enough to preſume, that this may be the caſe of not a few, and that (like Simon Magus) after they have made a very ſolemn profeſſion of chriſtianity, "their hearts may not be right in the "ſight of GOD."

Fourthly, if we put the caſe at the hardeſt, that ſome that were very ſincere, after they have held out a great while, under the extremity of torments, have at laſt fainted under them, and yielded to the malice and cruelty of their perſecutors, and in this amazement and diſtraction have not long after expired, without any teſtimony of their repentance: in this caſe both reaſon and charity ought to reſtrain us from paſſing any very poſitive and ſevere ſentence upon the ſtate of ſuch perſons. For what do we know, but GOD whoſe goodneſs will certainly make all the allowance to humane frailty that reaſon can require; "(for he knows whereof we are made; and remem- "bers that we are but duſt;" he mercifully conſiders every man's caſe, and weighs all the circumſtances of it in an exact balance;) I ſay who can tell, but in ſuch a caſe as I have mentioned, GOD may graciouſly be pleaſed to accept ſuch a degree of conſtant ſuffering of great torments for ſo long a time, for a true mar-

SERM. XCIX.

tyrdom, and not expect a more than humane patience and resolution, where he is not pleased to afford more than humane strength and support; and whether he may not look upon their failing and miscarriage at last, in the same rank with the indeliberate actions of men in a frenzy, and besides themselves?

And thus GOD may be said, "with the temptation "to make a way to escape." or to give a happy issue to it; since they were enabled to bear it, 'till being distracted by their torments, their understandings were thrown off the hinges, and incapable of exercising any deliberate acts of reason. And without some such equitable consideration of the case of such persons, it will be very hard to reconcile some appearances of things with the goodness of GOD, and the faithfulness of his promise.

However, it will become us to abstain from all uncharitableness and peremptory censure of the final estate of such persons, especially till we ourselves have given greater and better testimony of our constancy; and in the mean time, to leave them to the righteous and merciful sentence of their master and ours, to whose judgment we must all stand or fall.

I am sure it will very ill become those, who by the providence of GOD have escaped those sufferings, and are at present out of danger themselves, to sit in judgment upon those who are left to endure this terrible conflict, and have perhaps held out as long, or longer, than they themselves would have done in the like circumstances. Let us rather earnestly beg of "the "GOD of all grace and patience," that he would endue us with a greater measure of patience and constancy, if he see fit to call us to the exercise of it,

and

and (which we lawfully may, after the example of our blessed SAVIOUR) "that if it be his will, he "would let this cup pass from us," and not try us with the like sufferings, "lest we also be weary, "and faint in our minds." I come now to the SERM. XCIX.

IIId and last enquiry which I proposed; what ground and reason there is, for good men to expect the more peculiar and especial care of GOD's providence in case of such sufferings?

The providence of GOD extends to all his creatures, according to that of the Psalmist, "the LORD is "good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his "works." But he exerciseth a more particular providence towards mankind; and more peculiar yet towards those who study to please him, by obeying his laws and doing his will. He that is assured of his own heart, that he loves GOD, and would do or suffer any thing for him, can have no cause to doubt but that GOD loves him, and is concerned for his happiness. No man was ever afraid of GOD, that was not conscious to himself that he had offended him, and by the wilful breach of his laws had put himself out of the care of his providence. But on the contrary, if our hearts give us this testimony, that we have made it our sincere endeavour to please him, we are naturally apt to have good assurance and confidence of his favour and good-will towards us. This comfort the mind of every good man is apt to give him, from his own reason, and the natural notions which he hath of GOD.

But to free us from all doubt in this matter, GOD himself hath told us so, and given us plentiful assurance of it in his word, Psal. xi. 7. "The righteous LORD

SERM. XCIX.

" loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold " the upright;" that is, he will be favourable unto them. Psal. xxxiii. 18. " Behold the eye of the LORD " is upon them that fear him; upon them that hope " in his mercy." The eye of GOD signifies his watchful care and providence over good men. So that besides the sure and well-grounded reasonings, from the essential perfections of the divine nature, the mercy and goodness of GOD; " we have a " more sure word of promise," in the express declarations of GOD's word, and more particularly in the case of great temptations and sufferings. For can we think, that the scripture saith in vain, " wait on the " LORD, and be of good courage, and he shall " strengthen thine heart? Many are the afflictions of " the righteous, but the LORD delivereth him out " of all? the steps of a good man are ordered " by the LORD, and he delighteth in his ways, " though he fall he shall not utterly be cast down, " for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand? " the salvation of the righteous cometh of the LORD, " he is their help in time of trouble?" The same promises we find in the new testament. " All things " shall work together for good, to them that love " GOD. GOD is faithful, who hath promised, that " he will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye " are able, but will with the temptation make a " way to escape." And to mention no more; " hold " fast the profession of your faith without wavering, " he is faithful that hath promised;" viz. to support you under sufferings, and to reward them.

Thus much for the first point, namely, that when men do suffer truly for the cause of religion, they may

may with confidence commit themselves to the more peculiar care of the divine providence.

SERMON C.

The support of good men, under their sufferings for religion.

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1 PETER iv. 19.

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of GOD, *commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator.*

SERM. C.

The second sermon on this text.

FROM these words I proposed to consider these three points.

First, that when men do suffer really and truly for the cause of religion, they may with confidence commit themselves (their lives, and all that is dear to them) to the peculiar and more especial care of the divine providence.

Secondly, this we may do, always provided that we be careful of our duty, and do what is required on our part; and that neither to avoid sufferings, nor to rescue ourselves out of them, we do any thing contrary to our duty and a good conscience; for this is the meaning of "committing ourselves to GOD in "well-doing."

Thirdly, to shew what ground of comfort and encouragement the consideration of GOD, under the notion of "a faithful creator," does afford to us, under all our sufferings for a good cause and a good conscience.

The first of these points I have treated on at large in my former discourse. I proceed now to the

Second,

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Second, namely, when in all our sufferings for the cause of religion, we may with confidence and good assurance, commit ourselves to the peculiar and more especial care of GOD's providence; this is to be understood, always provided that we be careful of our duty, and do what is required on our part; and that neither to avoid sufferings, nor to rescue ourselves out of them, we do any thing contrary to our duty and a good conscience, and this I told you was the meaning of "committing ourselves to GOD in well-doing;" for if we either neglect our duty, or step out of the way of it, by doing things contrary to it, the providence of GOD will not be concerned to bear us out in such sufferings. So that in our sufferings for the cause of GOD and religion, "to commit ourselves to him in well-doing," may reasonably comprehend it in these following particulars.

1. Provided always, that we neglect no lawful means of our preservation from sufferings, or our deliverance out of them: in this case men do not commit themselves to the providence of GOD, but cast themselves out of his care and protection; they do not trust GOD, but tempt him, and do as it were try whether he will stand by us, when we desert ourselves, and bring us out of trouble, when we would take no care, would use no endeavours to prevent it. If we will needlessly provoke trouble, and run ourselves upon suffering; if we will neglect ourselves, and the lawful means of our preservation; if we will give up, and part with those securities of our religion, which the providence of GOD, and the laws of our country have given us; if we ourselves will help to pull down the fence which is about us; if we will disarm ourselves, and by our own act expose ourselves naked

naked and open to danger and ſufferings; why ſhould we think in this caſe, that GOD will help us, when we would not help ourſelves by thoſe lawful ways, which the providence of GOD hath put into our hands? SERM. C.

All truſt in GOD, and dependence upon his providence, does imply, that we join prayer and endeavour together; faith in GOD, and a prudent and diligent uſe of means: if we lazily truſt the providence of GOD, and ſo "caſt all our care upon him," as to take none at all ourſelves, GOD will take no care of us. In vain do we rely upon the wiſdom, and goodneſs, and power of GOD; in vain do we importune and tire heaven with our prayers, to help us againſt our enemies and perſecutors, if we ourſelves will do nothing for ourſelves: in vain do we hope that GOD will maintain and defend our religion, againſt all the ſecret contrivances and open aſſaults of our enemies, if we, who are united in the profeſſion of the ſame religion, and in all the eſſentials of faith and worſhip, will for ſome ſmall differences in leſſer matters, which are of no moment in compariſon of the things wherein we are agreed: I ſay, if for ſuch ſlight matters, we will divide and fall out among ourſelves; if when the enemy is at the gates, we will ſtill purſue our heats and animoſities, and will madly keep open thoſe breaches, which were fooliſhly made at firſt; what can we expect, but that the common enemy ſhould take the advantage, and enter in at them; and whilſt we are ſo unſeaſonably and ſenſeleſly contending with one another, that they ſhould take the opportunity which we give them to deſtroy us all.

2. Provided likewiſe, that we do not attempt our preſervation or deliverance from ſuffering, by evil

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evil and unlawful means: we muſt do nothing that is contrary to our duty, and to a good conſcience; nor comply with any thing, or lend our helping hand thereto, that apparently tends to the ruin of our religion, neither to divert nor put off ſufferings for the preſent, nor to reſcue ourſelves from under them; becauſe we cannot with confidence commit our ſelves to the providence of GOD, but in well-doing.

This is an eternal rule, from whence we muſt in no caſe depart, "that men muſt do nothing contrary "to the rules and precepts of religion, no not for the "ſake of religion itſelf:" we muſt not break any law of GOD, nor diſobey the lawful commands of lawful authority, to free ourſelves from any ſufferings whatſoever; becauſe the goodneſs of no end can ſanctify evil means, and make them lawful: we muſt not "ſpeak deceitfully for GOD," nor lye, no, not for the truth; nor kill men, though we could thereby do GOD and religion the greateſt ſervice. And tho' all the caſuiſts in the world ſhould teach the contrary doctrine, (as they generally do in the church of Rome) yet I would not doubt to oppoſe to all thoſe, the ſingle authority of St. Paul, who expreſly condemns this principle, and brands it for a damnable doctrine, "that evil may be done by us, that "good may come." Rom. iii. 8. "And not as we "be ſlanderouſly reported, and as ſome affirm that "we ſay, let us do evil, that good may come, whoſe "damnation is juſt." St. Paul, it ſeems, looked upon it as a moſt deviliſh calumny, to inſinuate that the chriſtian religion gives the leaſt countenance to ſuch damnable doctrines and doings as theſe; and pronounceth "their damnation to be juſt," who either teach any ſuch principle,

principle, as the doctrine of chriſtianity, or practiſe according to it. SERM. C.

Let thoſe look to it, who teach, that a right intention, and a good end, will render things, which are otherwiſe evil and unlawful, not only lawful to be done by us, but in many caſes meritorious; eſpecially where the good of the church, and the extirpation of hereſy are more immediately concerned. Of this nature are the doctrines of equivocation and mental reſervation, and the lawfulneſs of ſuch artificial ways of lying, to avoid the danger of the law, when they are brought before heretical magiſtrates; and this is the common doctrine of the moſt learned caſuiſts of all orders in the church of Rome: and ſuch likewiſe are their doctrines, of the lawfulneſs of extirpating hereticks, by the moſt barbarous and bloody means, and of breaking faith with them, tho' given by emperors and princes, in the moſt publick and ſolemn manner; both which are the avowed doctrines of their general councils, and have frequently been put in practice, to the deſtruction of many millions of chriſtians, better and more righteous than themſelves. "But we have not ſo "learned CHRIST, who have heard him, and "been taught by him as the truth is in JESUS." They who are rightly inſtructed in the chriſtian religion, are ſo far from thinking it lawful to do any thing that is evil, to bring others under ſuffering, that they do not allow it in any caſe whatſoever, no, not for the cauſe of GOD and religion, and to free themſelves from the greateſt ſufferings that can be inflicted upon them.

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3. Provided alſo, that we do truſt the providence of GOD, and do indeed commit our ſelves to it; relying upon his wiſdom and goodneſs, and entirely ſubmitting and reſigning up ourſelves to his will and diſpoſal, both as to the degree and duration of our ſufferings; believing that he will do that for us, which upon the whole matter, and in the final iſſue and reſult of things, will be beſt for us. That bleſſing, wherewith Moſes the man of GOD bleſt the people of Iſrael before his death, doth belong to good men in all ages: "he loveth his "people, and all his ſaints are in his hand:" Deut. xxxiii. 3. Innumerable are the promſes in ſcripture concerning the merciful providence and goodneſs of GOD, towards thoſe "who truſt in him, and hope "in his mercy," Pſal. xxxii. 10. "Many ſorrows "ſhall be to the wicked: but he that truſteth in "the LORD, mercy ſhall compaſs him about." Pſal. xxxiii. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22. "Behold the eye "of the LORD is upon them that fear him: upon "them that hope in his mercy: to deliver their "ſoul from death, and to keep them alive in fa- "mine. Our ſoul waiteth for the LORD: he is "our help and our ſhield. For our heart ſhall re- "joice in him: becauſe we have truſted in his holy "name. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, "according as we hope in thee." Pſal. xxxiv. 22. "The LORD redeemeth the ſoul of his ſervants: "and none of them that truſt in him ſhall be de- "ſolate." Pſal. xxxvii. 39, 40. "But the ſalva- "tion of the righteous is of the LORD, he is their "ſtrength in the time of trouble. And the LORD "ſhall help them and deliver them: he ſhall deliver

"them

" them from the wicked, and ſave them becauſe SERM. C.
" they truſt in him." Pſal. xxxi. 19, " O how
" great is thy goodneſs, which thou haſt laid up
" for them that fear thee; which thou haſt wrought
" for them that truſt in thee before the ſons of men!"
Pſal. lv. 22. " Caſt thy burden upon the LORD, and
" he ſhall ſuſtain thee: he ſhall never ſuffer the righte-
" ous to be moved." Pſal. cxxv. 1. " They that
" truſt in the LORD ſhall be as mount Zion, which
" cannot be removed, but abideth for ever." Iſa.
xxvi. 3, 4. " Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,
" whoſe mind is ſtayed on thee, becauſe he truſteth
" in thee. Truſt ye in the LORD for ever: for in
" the LORD JEHOVAH is everlaſting ſtrength."

4. Provided yet further, that we pray earneſtly to GOD for his gracious help and aſſiſtance, for his merciful comfort and ſupport under ſufferings; that he would be pleaſed to ſtrengthen our faith, and to increaſe and lengthen out our patience, in proportion to the degree and duration of our ſufferings.

All the promiſes which GOD hath made to us, are upon this condition, that we earneſtly ſeek and ſue to him for the benefit and bleſſing of them. Pſal. l. 15. " Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will
" deliver thee, and thou ſhalt glorify me." Ezek. xxxvi. 37. After a great deliverance, and many bleſſings promiſed to them, this condition is at laſt added, " thus ſaith the LORD GOD, I will yet for
" this be enquired of by the houſe of Iſrael, to do
" it for them." And this likewiſe is the tenor of the promiſes of the new teſtament, Matth. vii. 7. " Ask, and it ſhall be given you: ſeek, and ye
" ſhall find: knock, and it ſhall be opened unto

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" you." And in this very case that I am speaking of, GOD expects that we should apply ourselves to him, for spiritual wisdom and grace, to behave ourselves under sufferings as we ought: Jam. i. 2, 3, 4. where speaking of the manifold temptations that christians would be exercised withal, he directs them to pray to GOD for wisdom to demean themselves under persecutions, with patience, and constancy, and chearfulness, " my brethren, account it all joy, " when ye fall into divers temptations;" (meaning the temptations and trials of suffering in several kinds) " knowing this, that the trying of your faith " worketh patience. But let patience have its per- " fect work." And because this is a very difficult duty, and requires a great deal of spiritual skill, to demean ourselves under sufferings as we ought, therefore he adds in the next words: " if any of you " lack wisdom, let him ask of GOD, that giveth to " all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it " shall be given him."

And this earnest application we are to make to God, for " his grace and seasonable help in time " of need;" not to put him in mind of his promise, but to testify our dependence upon him, and expectation of all good from him. And we must likewise use great importunity in our prayers to GOD, to assist us and stand by us in the day of trial, and the hour of temptation. And therefore our SAVIOUR heaps up several words, to denote the great earnestness and importunity which we ought to use in prayer, bidding us " to ask, and seek, " and knock." And to shew that he lays more than ordinary weight upon this matter, and to encourage

courage our importunity, he ſpake two ſeveral parables to this purpoſe; the firſt, Luke xi. 5. of the man who by meer importunity prevailed with his friend to riſe at midnight to do him a kindneſs, which our SAVIOUR applies to encourage our importunity in prayer, ver. 9. "And I ſay unto you, ask, "and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; "knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you." The other is the parable of the importunate widow, and unjuſt judge, related by the ſame evangeliſt, Luke xviii. 1. with this preface to it; "and he ſpake a "parable unto them to this end, that men ought "always to pray, and not to faint." And to ſpeak the truth, they ſeem at firſt ſight two of the oddeſt of all our SAVIOUR's parables, as if the deſign of them were to inſinuate to us, that GOD is to be prevailed upon by the meer importunity of our prayers, to grant our requeſts: but our bleſſed SAVIOUR, who beſt knew his own meaning, tells us, that all that he deſign'd by it, was only to ſignify, "that we ought "always to pray, and not to faint;" that is, "to "continue inſtant in prayer," and not to give over after once asking, as if we deſpaired of prevailing. Not that mere importunity prevails with GOD to give us thoſe things which he is otherwiſe unwilling to grant; but becauſe it becomes us to be fervent, and earneſt, to teſtify our faith and confidence in the goodneſs of GOD, and the deep ſenſe we have of our own weakneſs, and wants, and unworthineſs; and likewiſe that we ſet a true value upon the bleſſings and favours of GOD, as worth all the earneſtneſs and importunity we can uſe: and in this decent and ſober ſenſe, the ſucceſs of our prayers may truly be ſaid to

SERM. C.

depend

SERM. C. depend upon our importunity; not that it is necessary to move GOD to grant our requests, but that it becomes us to be thus affected, that we may be the more fitly qualified for the grace and mercy which GOD is willing to confer upon us.

I have been the longer upon this, to give us a right notion of this matter, and that we may the more distinctly understand the true reason why our SAVIOUR does require so much earnestness and importunity of prayer on our part; not at all to work upon GOD, and to dispose him to shew mercy to us (for that he is always inclinable to whenever we are fit for it) but only to dispose and qualify us to receive the grace and mercy of GOD, with greater advantage to our selves.

5. Provided moreover, that we be not confident of our selves, and of the force and strength of our own resolution. We know not our selves, nor the frailty and weakness of our own resolution, 'till we are tried. 'Tis wise advice which Solomon gives us, and never more seasonable than in the day of trial, Prov. iii. 5, 6, 7. "Trust in the LORD with all "thine heart, and lean not to thine own understand-"ing; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he "shall direct thy paths; be not wise in thine own "eyes;" that is, be not conceited and confident of thine own wisdom and strength, or ability in any kind; there is a secret providence of GOD, which mingles itself with the actions and spirits of men, and disposeth of us unknown to our selves; and what we think to be the effect of our own strength and resolution, of our own wisdom and contrivance, proceeds from an higher cause, which unseen to us, does steer and govern us. So the wise man observes, Prov. xx. 24.

24. " Man's goings are of the LORD, how can a SERM. C.
" man then underſtand his own ways?" and therefore we have reaſon every one to ſay with the prophet, Jer. x. 23. " O LORD, I know that the way " of man is not in himſelf, it is not in man that " walketh to direct his ſteps." Our feet will ſoon ſlip, if GOD do not " uphold us by his hand." Remember how ſhamefully the chief of our LORD's diſciples miſcarried, by too much confidence in himſelf, I mean St. Peter; in whoſe fall we may all ſee our own frailty; if GOD do but permit the devil to have the winnowing of us, there will be a great deal of chaff found in the beſt of us. What St. Paul ſaid of himſelf, 2 Cor. xii. 10. " when I am weak, " then am I ſtrong," we ſhall all find true, when it comes to the trial; we are then ſtrongeſt, when, in a juſt ſenſe of our own weakneſs, we rely moſt upon the ſtrength and power of GOD.

6. Provided furthermore, that according to our ability, we have been much in the exerciſe of alms and charity. For well-doing, or doing good is ſometimes taken in a narrower ſenſe, not improper here to be mentioned, tho' perhaps not ſo particularly intended here in the text, " for works of charity and " alms." As Heb. xiii. 16. " But to do good, and " to communicate" (that is, to the neceſſities of the poor) " forget not, for with ſuch ſacrifices GOD is " well pleaſed." This kind of well-doing is a ſpecial preſervative in times of evil; there is no kind of grace or virtue to which there are in ſcripture more ſpecial promiſes made of our protection and preſervation from evil and ſuffering, of ſupport and comfort under them, and deliverance out of them, than

to

SERM. C. to this of a charitable and compassionate consideration of those who labour under want or suffering. Psal. xxxvii. 3. "Trust in the LORD, and do good, "so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou "shalt be fed:" and ver. 19. speaking of righteous or merciful men, "they shall not be ashamed in "the evil time, and in the days of famine they "shall be satisfied." Psal. xli. 1, 2. "Blessed is he "that considereth the poor, the LORD will deliver "him in time of trouble; the LORD will preserve him "and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon "the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the "will of his enemies."

There are likewise in the apocryphal books excellent sayings for the encouragement of charity, as that which will be particularly considered and rewarded to us in the times of danger and distress, in the days of affliction and suffering, Tob. iv. 7, 8, 9, 10. "Give alms of thy substance, and turn not "thy face from any poor man, and the face of GOD "shall not be turned away from thee; if thou hast "abundance, give alms accordingly; if thou hast "but a little, be not afraid to give according to that "little, for thou layest up for thy self a good trea-"sure against the day of necessity, because that alms "do deliver from death, and suffereth not to come "into darkness." Ecclus. iii. 31. speaking of him that gives alms, and is ready to do kindness to others; "he is mindful of that which may come hereafter; "and when he falleth he shall find a stay." And chap. xxix. 11, 12, 13. "Lay up thy treasure ac-"cording to the commandment of the most high, "and it shall bring thee more profit than gold, shut

"up

" up alms in thy ſtore-houſes, and it ſhall deliver SERM.
" thee from all affliction, it ſhall fight for thee againſt C.
" thine enemies, better than a mighty ſhield, and
" ſtrong ſpear."

I have often ſaid it, and am verily perſuaded of it, that one of the beſt ſigns of GOD's mercy and favour to this poor nation, is, that GOD hath been pleaſed of late years to ſtir up ſo general a diſpoſition in men to works of alms and charity, and thereby to revive the primitive ſpirit of chriſtianity, which ſo eminently " abounded in this grace," and taught " thoſe who believed in GOD, to be careful to main-
" tain and practiſe good works." And nothing gives me greater hopes that GOD hath mercy ſtill in ſtore for us, than that men are ſo ready to ſhew mercy; there are great objects to exerciſe our charity upon in this time of the general ſuſpenſion of trade and buſineſs, from an apprehenſion of approaching troubles; by reaſon whereof, both the numbers and neceſſities of our poor, are greatly and daily increaſed among us; and beſides the poor of our own nation, GOD has ſent us great numbers from abroad; I mean thoſe who are fled hither for ſhelter, from that violent ſtorm of perſecution which hath lately fallen upon them for the cauſe of our common religion. According to the compaſſion we ſhew to them, we may expect that GOD will either preſerve us from the like ſufferings, or graciouſly ſupport us under them. What do we know, but that GOD is now trying us, and hath purpoſely put this opportunity into our hands, of preventing or mitigating, or ſhortening our own ſufferings, according as we extend our charity and pity to thoſe

SERM. C. who have ſuffered ſo deeply for the cauſe of GOD, and his truth.

7. Provided in the laſt place, and above all, that we be ſincere in our religion, and endeavour to be univerſally good, and "holy in all manner of con-"verſation," and "to abound in all the fruits of righ-"teouſneſs, which are by JESUS CHRIST, to the "praiſe and glory of GOD." This is the largeſt ſenſe of well-doing, and the moſt neceſſary of all the reſt, to prepare us for ſufferings, and to give us courage and conſtancy under them; and likewiſe to engage the providence of GOD to a tender care of us, and concernment for us, if he ſhall ſee it fit to bring us into a ſtate of ſuffering.

But if we live in open contempt and violation of GOD's laws, if we make no conſcience of our ways and actions, we cannot poſſibly have any well-grounded truſt and confidence in GOD, for "he "hates all the workers of iniquity," and his provi-dence "ſets it ſelf againſt them for evil." Bad men draw many miſchiefs and inconveniencies upon them-ſelves, as the natural conſequences of their actions; but beſides this, the vengeance of GOD haunts and purſues evil-doers, and his juſt providence many times involves them in many difficulties and dan-gers, beſides and beyond the natural courſe of things: "upon the wicked (ſays David) he will rain "ſnares." So that as ever we expect the comfortable effects of the divine care and providence, we muſt live in a dutiful obedience to GOD's holy will and laws.

Bad men may make a profeſſion of the true reli-gion, and may in ſome ſort believe it, tho' they do not

not live according to it; and yet perhaps for all this, out of a mere generoſity and obſtinacy of mind, they cannot bear to be threatned and terrified out of the profeſſion of the truth; and will endure a great deal of trouble and inconveniencies, before they will renounce it; knowing themſelves to be ſo far in the right, that they ſtand for the truth, and hoping perhaps thereby to make ſome amends for their bad practice. But when all is done, nothing gives a man true courage and reſolution, like the teſtimony of our own hearts, concerning our own ſincerity, and the conſcience of well-doing. And on the contrary, he that hath not the reſolution and patience to mortify his luſts, and to reſtrain his appetites, and to ſubdue his irregular paſſions, for the ſake of GOD and religion, will not eaſily bring himſelf to ſubmit to great ſufferings upon that account. There is conſiderable difficulty in the practice of religion, and the reſolute courſe of a holy life; but ſurely it is much eaſier to live as religion requires we ſhould do, than to lay down our lives for it; and (as I have told you upon another occaſion) he that cannot prevail with himſelf to live a ſaint, will much more hardly be perſuaded to die a martyr. I proceed to the

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Third point, namely, what ground of comfort and encouragement the conſideration of GOD under the notion of "a faithful creator," does afford to us under all our ſuffering for a good conſcience and a good cauſe. "Let them that ſuffer according to the "will of GOD, commit the keeping of their ſouls "to him, in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator." And in this I ſhall be very brief.

And this is a firm ground of comfort and en-

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couragement to us, under all our ſufferings for GOD, to conſider him as the author of our beings, or as it is expreſt in the text, "as a faithful creator;" one that is not fickle and inconſtant in his affection and kindneſs to his creatures; but is true to his own deſign, and will not abandon and forſake the work of his own hands: ſo great a benefit as that of our beings, freely conferred upon us, is but an earneſt of GOD's further kindneſs to us, and future care of us; if by our ill carriage towards him, we do not render ourſelves unworthy and incapable of it: that we are GOD's creatures, is a demonſtration that he hath a kindneſs for us; if he had not, he would never have made us; as it is excellently ſaid in the Wiſdom of Solomon, chap. xi. 23, 24. "Thou haſt mercy upon "all, for thou loveſt all the things that are, and "abhorreſt nothing which thou haſt made: for ne- "ver wouldſt thou have made any thing, if thou "hadſt hated it." And ver. 26. "Thou ſpareſt all, "for they are thine, O LORD, thou lover of ſouls."

To whom then may we with ſo much confidence commit ourſelves, as to him who freely gave us our being? from whom may we expect ſo tender a regard and conſideration of our caſe, and all the circumſtances of it; as from this great founder and benefactor? for "he that made us "knows our frame, and whereof we are made," and how much we are able to bear; he conſiders our ſtrength, or rather our weakneſs, and what courage and reſolution he hath endued us withal, and what comfort and ſupport we ſtand in need of in the day of tribulation. And as they who make armour, are wont to try that which they think to be

good

good and well tempered, with a ſtronger charge, not to break and hurt it, but to prove and praiſe it: ſo GOD exerciſeth thoſe whom he hath fitted and tempered for it, with manifold temptations, "that the "trial of your faith," as St. Peter expreſſeth it, 1 Pet. i. 7. "being much more precious than of gold tried "in the fire, may be found unto praiſe, and honour, "and glory, at the appearing of JESUS CHRIST."

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So that this conſideration that we are GOD's creatures, does (as I may ſay) oblige him in faithfulneſs to his own act, and in conſequence of his bringing us into being at firſt, to be concerned for us afterwards, ſo as never to abandon us, nor quite to take away his loving-kindneſs and mercy from us; till we are good for nothing, and do in a manner ceaſe to be what he made us, that is reaſonable creatures. A perſon or people muſt have proceeded to the utmoſt degree of degeneracy, when GOD will conſider them no longer as his creatures, nor ſhew any pity or favour to them; things muſt be come to extremity, when GOD deals thus with us, as he threatned the people of Iſrael, Iſa. xxvii. 11. "When the "boughs are withered, they ſhall be broken off, and "ſet on fire? for it is a people of no underſtanding: "therefore he that made them will not have mercy "on them, and he that formed them, will ſhew them "no favour."

And now I have done with theſe three points which I propoſed to handle from this text, and the diſcourſe which I have made upon them, does all along apply itſelf, by directing us how we ought "to commit "ourſelves" to the providence of GOD, in all caſes of danger and ſuffering, eſpecially for the cauſe of

GOD

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God and his truth, viz. in the faithful discharge of our duty and a good conscience, by a firm trust and confidence in the wisdom and goodness of the divine providence, not doubting but that "he who made "us, and knows our frame," will have a tender care of us, and "not suffer us to be tempted above "what we are able."

And as to our present danger, and that terrible storm which threatens us, let us pray to God, if it be his will, to divert it; but if otherwise he hath determined, to fit and prepare us for it. And let us be fervent and earnest in our prayers to him, not that he is moved by our importunity, but that we may thereby be qualified and made fit to receive the mercy which we beg of him.

And let us take this occasion to do that which we should have done without it, "to break off our "sins by repentance, and to turn every one of us "from the evil of our ways;" that hereby we may render God propitious to us, and put ourselves under the more immediate care and protection of his providence; that we may prevent his judgments, and turn away his wrath and displeasure from us, as he did once from a great and sinful city and people, upon their sincere humiliation and repentance, Jonah iii. 10. where it is said of the people of Nineveh, "That God saw their works, that they turned from "their evil way, and God repented of the evil that "he had said he would do unto them, and he "did it not." Above all, let us be sincere in the profession of our religion, and conscientious in the practice of it; nothing will bear us up under great trials and sufferings, like "the testimony of a good "con-

" conscience, void of offence towards GOD and " towards men."

I will conclude this whole discourse, with those apostolical blessings and prayers, Colos. i. 10, 11. " That ye may walk worthy of the LORD, unto " all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, " strengthned with all might according to his glo- " rious power, unto all patience, and long-suffer- " ing, with joyfulness." And 2 Thes. ii. 16, 17, " Now our LORD JESUS CHRIST himself, and " GOD even our FATHER who hath loved us, " and hath given us everlasting consolation and " good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, " and stablish you in every good word and work." To him be glory and dominon for ever and ever, Amen.

SERMON CI.

Of the work assign'd to every man, and the season for doing it.

JOHN ix. 4.

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.

THESE words our blessed SAVIOUR spake of himself, whilst he was upon earth; in which he tells us, that he was sent by GOD into the world, and had a certain work and employment appointed him during his abode in it. SERM. CI.

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A great work indeed! to instruct, to reform, and save mankind. A work of great labour, and pains, and patience, not to be done in a short time; and yet the time for doing it was not long, after he came into the world: it was a good while before he began it, and after he began it, the time of working was not long, before the night came and put an end to it: "I must work the works of him that "sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when "no man can work."

But that which our SAVIOUR here speaks of himself, and which properly belongs to him, and no other; may yet be accommodated to every man, with some allowance for the difference and disproportion. For tho' every man be not sent by GOD into the world, after so peculiar a manner, and upon so particular and vast a design: yet upon a general account, every man is sent by GOD into this world, and hath a work given him to do in it, which he is concern'd vigorously to mind and to prosecute with all his might. And tho' every man be not sent to save the whole world, as the SON of GOD was, yet every man is sent by GOD into the world, "to "work out his own salvation," and to take care of that in the first place, and then to promote the salvation of others, as much as in him lies. So that every one of us may, in a very good sense, accommodate these words of our SAVIOUR to himself: "I "must work the works of him that sent me, while "it is day: the night cometh when no man can "work."

I shall therefore at this time take the liberty to handle these words according to this moral accommodation

modation of them, and apply what our SAVIOUR here ſays of himſelf, to every man that cometh into the world: and this I ſhall do, by ſhewing theſe three things. SERM. CI.

Firſt, that every man hath a work aſſigned him to do in this world, by him that ſent him into it; and may in ſome ſenſe ſay, as our bleſſed SAVIOUR did of himſelf," I muſt work the works of him that " ſent me."

Secondly, that there is a certain and limited time for every man to do this work in. " While it is " day."

Thirdly, that after this ſeaſon is expired, there will be no further opportunity of working. " The " night cometh, when no man can work."

Firſt, every man hath a work aſſigned him to do in this world, by him that ſent him into it; and may in ſome ſenſe ſay, as our bleſſed SAVIOUR did of himſelf, " I muſt work the works of him that " ſent me." GOD who made man a reaſonable creature, and hath endowed him with faculties, whereby he is capable of knowing and ſerving him; hath appointed him a work and ſervice ſuitable to theſe faculties: and having infuſed an immortal ſoul into this earthy body, hath certainly deſigned him for a ſtate beyond this life, in which he ſhall be for ever happy or miſerable, according as he uſeth and demeans himſelf in this world.

So that the work which every one of us hath to do in this world, is to prepare and fit our ſelves for that eternal duration which remains for us after death. For the life which we live now in this world is a time of exerciſe, a ſhort ſtate of probation and

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trial, in order to a durable and endless state, in which we shall be immutably fix'd in another world. This world, into which we are now sent for a little while, is as it were GOD's school, in which immortal spirits, clothed with flesh, are trained and bred up for eternity; and therefore the best, the only sure way to be happy for ever, is, so to improve the short and uncertain time of this life, that we may approve our selves to GOD in this world, and enjoy him in the next; or (as St. Paul expresseth it) "that "having our fruit unto holiness, our end may be "everlasting life."

And this work consists in these three things.

I. In the care of our own salvation.

II. In doing what we can to promote the salvation of others.

III. And in order to both these, in the careful improvement and good husbandry of our time.

I. In the care of our own salvation. And this consists in two things.

1. In the worship of almighty GOD.

2. In the careful and conscientious practice and obedience of his holy laws.

1. The care of our own salvation consists in the pious and devout worship of almighty GOD; that we honour him, and pay him that homage and respect, which is due from creatures to him that made them, and is the great sovereign and judge of the world; that we have an inward reverence and esteem of him, and that we express this by all solemn external acknowledgments of him; as by praying to him for the supply of our wants; by praising him for all the blessings and benefits which we have received at his hands;

hands; and that we ſet apart conſtant and ſolemn times for the performance of theſe duties; and then when we are employed in them, we be ſerious, and hearty, and attentive to what we are about, and perform every part of divine worſhip with thoſe circumſtances of reverence and reſpect, which may teſtify our awful ſenſe of the divine majeſty, and our inward and profound veneration of him, with whom we have to do. And this is that which is directly and properly religion. SERM. CI.

2. This care of our own ſalvation does conſiſt likewiſe in the conſcientious and conſtant obedience and practice of GOD's holy laws, in the conformity of our lives and actions to the laws which he hath given us, whether they be natural, or written upon our hearts, or made known to us by the revelation of his word; that we govern our paſſions by reaſon, and moderate our ſelves in the uſe of ſenſual delights, ſo as not to tranſgreſs the rules of temperance and chaſtity; that we demean our ſelves towards others, and converſe with them with juſtice and fidelity, with kindneſs and charity.

Theſe are the ſum of the divine laws, and the heads of our duty towards our ſelves and others; all which are more powerfully enforced upon us by the revelation of the goſpel, and the plain promiſes and threatnings of it; the faith of CHRIST being the moſt firm and effectual principle both of piety towards GOD, and of univerſal obedience to all his particular commands.

And this is the great work which GOD hath ſent us to do in the world. So the wiſe man ſums up our duty, Eccleſ. xii. 13. "Fear GOD, and keep his

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" commandments; for this is the whole duty of " man." The fear and reverence of the divine majesty is the great foundation and principle of religion; but obedience to GOD's laws, is the life and practice of it. GOD does not expect that we should spend the greatest part of our time in the immediate acts of religion, and in the solemn duties of his worship and service; but only that we should allot a fitting portion of our time to these, according to the circumstances of our condition in this world, and the example of holy and good men that are in the like circumstances with our selves. For such is the goodness of GOD, that he does not only allow us to provide for the necessaries and conveniencies of this life; but hath made it our duty so to do. It is one of the precepts of the gospel, which the apostle chargeth the bishops and teachers of the gospel to inculcate frequently upon christians, " that they which have believed in GOD, should be " careful to maintain good works," that is, to employ themselves in the works of an honest calling," " for necessary uses;" that is, for the support of their families, and the relief of those who are in want and necessity. And the apostle lays great weight and stress upon this, as a very great duty, Tit. iii. 8. " This is a faithful saying, and these things I will " that thou affirm constantly, that they which have " believed in GOD, might be careful to maintain " good works. These things are good and profitable " unto men;" that is, of general benefit and advantage to mankind.

So that no man's calling is a hindrance to religion, but a part of it; and by performing the duties of piety in their proper seasons, and spending the rest of

of our time in any honeſt and uſeful employment, we may make our whole life a perpetual ſerving of GOD; we may glorify GOD in our eating and drinking, and in all other lawful and uſeful actions of life. In ſerving the occaſions and neceſſities of life, with ſobriety and temperance, and in managing our worldly commerce with juſtice and integrity, we may ſerve GOD, and perform conſiderable duties of religion. SERM. CI.

So that provided we do nothing that is ſinful, and manage the actions and concernments of this life, with a due regard and ſubſerviency to the great intereſts of eternity, we may do the work of GOD all the while we are providing for our ſelves, and employed in the works of an honeſt calling: for GOD, who hath deſigned this life in order to the other, conſiders the neceſſities of our preſent ſtate, and allows us to make proviſion for it.

There are ſome perſons indeed whoſe birth and condition ſets them above the common employments of life, and the works of an ordinary calling: but theſe alſo have a work given them to do; for GOD hath ſent no man into the world to no purpoſe, and only to take his paſtime therein; *neque enim ita generati ſumus à natura, ut ad ludum & jocum facti eſſe videamur; ſed ad ſeveritatem potiùs, & quædam ſtudia graviora atque majora*; "for we are not (ſays Tully "de off. lib. 1.) ſo framed by nature, as if we were "made for ſport and jeſt, but for more ſerious em- "ployments, and for greater and weightier buſi- "neſs;" and thoſe who are tied to no particular calling, may allow ſo much larger portions of their time to religion, and the ſervice of GOD; and GOD likewiſe expects from them, that they ſhould be uſeful

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to mankind in some higher and nobler way, according to the publickness of their station and influence. Such persons may be serviceable to their country, and the affairs of government, and in the care of publick justice, and may employ their time in preparing and rendring themselves more fit for this service. They may find a great deal of work to do in the good government of their families, and in the prudent care and management of their estates, and in reconciling differences among their neighbours, and in considering the necessities of the poor, and providing for their supply.

So that besides the proper work of religion, and the more immediate service of GOD, every man in the world, how exempt soever his condition be from the common care and drudgery of humane life, may find work enough wherein he may usefully employ all his time, and provide for his own, and for the common benefit of mankind; and GOD expects it as a duty from such, that every man should employ himself in some work or other, suitable to the station in which GOD hath placed him in this world.

II. The work which GOD hath given us to do in the world, consists in doing what we can to further and promote the salvation of others. This chiefly lies upon us, who are "the ministers of GOD, and "to whom the word of reconciliation is committed." We are more especially commission'd and appointed for this work, and are "ambassadors for CHRIST, "to beseech men in his stead to be reconciled to "GOD." We are sent by GOD in a more peculiar manner, and appointed for this very work, "to "watch for mens souls," and to be instruments

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and means of their eternal happineſs. And therefore we who are ſent by God in a more peculiar manner, and have this work aſſigned us to do in the world, ought to be very vigorous and induſtrious in it; and this, whether we conſider the nature of our employment, or the glorious reward of it. SERM. CI.

1. If we conſider the nature of our employment, both in reſpect of the honour and the happineſs of it. 'Tis the moſt honourable work that mortal man can be employed in; 'tis the ſame in kind, and in the main end and deſign of it, with that of the bleſſed angels; for we alſo are "miniſtring ſpirits, ſent forth "by GOD to miniſter, for the good of thoſe who "ſhall be heirs of ſalvation." We are the meſſengers and ambaſſadors of GOD to men, ſent to treat with them about the terms of their peace and reconciliation with GOD, to offer ſalvation to them, and to direct them to the beſt ways and means of procuring it. Nay, we have the honour to be employed in the very ſame work that the SON of GOD was, when he was upon the earth, "to ſeek and to ſave them that "are loſt; and to call ſinners to repentance;" and to carry on that work, whereof he himſelf laid the foundation, when he was in the world. And what greater honour can be put upon the ſons of men, than to help forward that glorious deſign and undertaking of the SON of GOD, for the ſalvation of mankind.

And 'tis an employment no leſs happy and honourable; 'tis not to drudge about the mean and low concernments of this life; a perpetual toil and care about "what we ſhall eat and drink, and where-"withal we ſhall be clothed," which is the buſineſs of

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" of a worldly employment; but it is a direct and immediate " seeking of the kingdom of GOD, and " his righteousness," and a continual endeavour to promote these. It does not consist in the labour of our body, and in bodily toil; but in the delightful exercise of our minds, about the best and noblest objects, GOD, and heaven, and eternity; in an earnest and faithful endeavour by all wise ways and means to gain souls to GOD, and " to turn sinners from the " errors of their ways," and to prevent their eternal ruin and destruction; and next to the procuring of our own happiness, to be instrumental to the happiness of others, which is certainly the most pleasant and noble work that we can possibly be employed in; especially if we consider, that by the very nature of our employment, we do at the same time, and by the very same means, carry on both these designs, of the salvation of ourselves and others. So St. Paul tells Timothy, when he exhorts him upon this very consideration," to give himself wholly" to this blessed work; because, says he, " in doing this, thou shalt " save thyself, and them that hear thee," 1 Tim. iv. 16. And when two of the greatest and best designs in the world, our own happiness, and the salvation of others, do so happily meet in one, and are jointly carried on by the same labour; this ought to be a great spur and incitement to us, to be vigorous and unwearied, " and abundant in the work of the " LORD;" and a mighty encouragement to us " to " preach the word, to be instant in season, and out " of season," and " to be examples to others, in " word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in " faith, in purity;" as St. Paul chargeth Timothy in

in the moſt ſolemn and awful manner, "before GOD, "and the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who ſhall judge "the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his "kingdom," 1 Tim. iv. 12. and 2 Tim. iv. 1. And then, SERM. CI.

2. If we conſider the glorious reward of this work. If we be faithful and induſtrious in it, it will advance us to a higher degree of glory and happineſs in the other world. "They that be wiſe" (ſays the prophet, Dan. xii. 3.) "ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of "the firmament, and they that turn many to righ-"teouſneſs, as the ſtars for ever and ever." They that are induſtrious in this work, as they are "worthy "of double honour" in this world, ſo they ſhall ſhine with a double glory and luſtre in the other.

But tho' this work of promoting the ſalvation of others, be chiefly incumbent upon thoſe whoſe office it is to attend upon this very thing; yet we are all of us concerned in it, according to the advantages and opportunities we have for it. Every man is concerned to help forward the ſalvation of his brother, and not let him periſh if he can help it; and it is in every man's power to contribute ſomething to this bleſſed work of ſaving others by ſeaſonable counſel and advice, by kind and gentle reproof, but eſpecially by a holy and exemplary converſation, by a ſhining virtue, which hath a ſilent power of perſuaſion, and I know not what ſecret charm and attraction to draw and allure others to the imitation of it.

III. And in order to both theſe, the ſaving of ourſelves and others, this work, which GOD hath given us to do in the world, conſiſts in the careful uſe and good husbandry of our time; for without this, neither the

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the one nor the other can be promoted and carried on to any purpose. Time is the season and opportunity of carrying on of any work, and for that reason is one of the most valuable things; and yet nothing is more wastefully spent, and more prodigally squandered away by a great part of mankind than this, which next to our immortal souls, is of all other things most precious; because upon the right use or abuse of our time, our eternal happiness or misery does depend. Men have generally some guard upon themselves, as to their money and estates, and will not with eyes open suffer others to rob and deprive them of it: but we will let any body almost rob us of our time, and are contented to expose this precious treasure to every body's rapine and extortion, and can quietly look on, whilst men thrust in their hands and take it out by whole handfuls, as if it were of no greater value than silver was in Solomon's days, no more than the stones in the street. And yet when it is gone, all the silver and gold in the world cannot purchase and fetch back the least moment of it, when perhaps we would give all the world for a very small part of that time, which we parted with upon such cheap and easy terms.

Good God! what a stupid and senseless prodigality is this! do we consider what we do, when we give away such large portions of our time to our ease and pleasure, to diversion and idleness, or trifling and unprofitable conversation, to the making and receiving of impertinent visits, and the usual and almost inseparable attendants thereof, spiteful observations upon them that are present, and slandering and backbiting those that are absent; (for the great design

deſign of moſt people in viſits, is not to better one another, but to ſpy and make faults, and not to mend them; to get time off their hands, to ſhew their fine clothes, and to recommend themſelves to the mutual contempt of one another, by a plentiful impertinence;) when we part with it by wholeſale in ſleep and dreſſings, and can ſpend whole mornings between the comb and the glaſs, and the afternoon at plays, and whole nights in gaming, or in riot, and lewdneſs, and intemperance; in all which people commonly waſte their money and their time together!

Nay how do even the beſt of us miſplace this precious treaſure; and tho' we do not employ it to wicked purpoſes, and in works of iniquity, yet we do not apply it to the beſt and nobleſt uſe, to the glory of GOD, and the good and ſalvation of men! by thus laying out this treaſure, we might "lay up "for our ſelves treaſures in heaven," and help others on in the way thither.

Thus our bleſſed SAVIOUR employed his precious time, in "going about doing good," in all kinds, and upon all occaſions, healing the bodies, and enlightning the minds, and ſaving the ſouls of men: this was his buſineſs, and this was his delight; it was "his meat and drink," and his very life, he ſpent himſelf in it, and ſacrificed his eaſe, and his ſafety, and his life to theſe great ends, for which he came into the world; he conſidered the goodneſs and the greatneſs of this work, and the little time he had to do it in, which made him inceſſantly induſtrious in it, and to run the race which was ſet before him with great ſpeed, and "to work while it is day," be-

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cause he knew "the night would come when no "man can work." And this brings me to the

Second thing I observed, from the text, namely, that there is a certain and limited time for every man to do this work in; "while it is day. I must work "the works of him that sent me, whilst it is day." And this day comprehends all the opportunities of our life, which will soon be over, and therefore had need to be well spent. A great part of our life is past before the season of working begins; it is a great while before the use of our reason begins, and we come to have our senses exercised to discern between good and evil; before our understandings are ripe for the serious consideration of GOD and religion, and for the due care of our souls, and of the eternal concernment of another world; so that this first part of our life is in a great measure useless and unprofitable to us, in regard to our great design. For infancy and childhood are but the dawnings of this day, and no fit time to work in; and youth, which is as the morning of this day, tho' it is the flower of our time, and the most proper season of all other, for the remembrance of GOD, and the impressions of religion; yet it is usually possest by vanity and vice; the common custom and practice of the world, hath devoted this best part of our age to the worst employments, to the service of sin and of our lusts. How very few are there that lay hold of this opportunity, and employ it to the best purposes? and yet the following course of our lives doth in a great measure depend upon it; for most persons do continue and hold on in the way which they set out at first, whether it be good or bad. And those who neglect to improve this first op-

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portunity of their lives, do ſeldom recover themſelves afterwards. God's grace may ſeize upon men in any part of their lives; but according to the moſt ordinary methods of it, the foundations and principles of religion and virtue are moſt commonly laid in a pious and virtuous education. This is the great opportunity of our lives, which ſettleth and fixeth moſt men, either in a good or bad courſe, and the fortune of their whole lives does uſually follow it, and depend upon it. SERM. CI.

'Tis true indeed our day continues many times a great while longer, and we are to work while it continues; and 'tis never too late to begin to do well, and to enter upon a good courſe: but there is no ſuch proper and advantageous ſeaſon for the beginning of this work, as in our youth and tender years. "This "is the accepted time, this is the day of ſalvation." God's grace is then moſt forward and ready to aſſiſt us; and we are then leaſt of all indiſpos'd for the receiving of the impreſſions of it; and the impreſſions of it do then go deepeſt into our minds, and are moſt laſting and durable. But if we neglect this opportunity, we provoke God by degrees to withdraw his grace, and to take away his Holy Spirit from us, and by degrees we ſettle in vicious habits, and are every day more and more "hardened "through the deceitfulneſs of ſin." It is never too late to work while the day laſts; but the ſooner we begin this work, and ſet about it in good earneſt, the eaſier we ſhall find it; if we defer it late, every ſtep will be up the hill, and againſt the grain.

Thirdly, after this ſeaſon is expired, there will be no further opportunity of working; when this day is once

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once at an end, then "cometh the night when no "man can work." The night is a time unfit for work, when we can hardly do any thing, if we had never so great a mind to it; and there is such a night coming upon every one of us, and wo be to us if we have our work to do when the night overtakes us.

There is usually an evening before this night, when it will be very difficult for us, and next to impossible, to do this work; and this is the time of sickness and old-age, in which men are commonly unfit for any work; but most of all, that which requires the whole force and vigour of our minds, the business of religion. If we attempt this work then, we shall go very heartlesly about it, and do it very imperfectly, and be forc'd to slubber it over, and to huddle it up in great haste and confusion, and so as we can hardly hope that GOD will accept it. For how unfit are men to do any thing, when they are full of the sense of their own infirmities, and life it self is become so great a burden to them, that they are hardly able to stand under it! how uncapable shall we then be of doing the greatest and most momentous work of our lives, when our faculties are almost quite spent and worn out, and all the powers of life are decayed in us; when our understandings are dark and dull, our memories frail and treacherous, and our hearts hard and "deceitful above all things!" when sickness and old age overtake us, we shall then find to our sorrow that "sufficient for that day is the evil "thereof;" we shall have need then of nothing else to do, but to bear our infirmities with patience and decency; and it is well if we can rally together of the broken

broken forces of our reaſon, ſo much as may be a ſufficient guard to us againſt peeviſhneſs and diſcontent; we had need then have nothing elſe to do, but to be old and weak, to be ſick and die. SERM. CI.

Beſides, how can we expect that GOD ſhould accept of any work that we do at ſuch a time? with what face can we put off GOD with the dregs of our life? or how can we hope that he will be pleaſed with the ſervice of thoſe years, which we ourſelves "take no pleaſure in? if we offer the lame in ſa-"crifice, is it not evil? and if we offer the blind, "is it not evil? offer it now to thy governour, and "ſee if he will be pleaſed with thee?"

And ſickneſs is commonly as bad a time as old age, and uſually incumber'd with greater difficulties, and clog'd with more indiſpoſitions. If a violent diſtemper ſeize upon us, it many times takes away the uſe of our reaſon, and deprives us of all opportunity of conſideration; it makes us both inſenſible of the danger of our condition, and incapable of uſing the means to avoid it. And if we have neglected religion before, and have put off the great work of our life to the end of it, our opportunity is irrecoverably loſt; for there is nothing to be done in religion, when our reaſon is once departed from us; "the night is then come" indeed, and "darkneſs "hath overtaken us;" and tho' we be ſtill alive, yet are we as unfit for any work, as if we were naturally dead.

And this is no ſuch rare and extraordinary caſe; for it happens to many; and every man that wilfully defers the work of religion and repentance to a dying hour, hath reaſon to fear that he ſhall be thus

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surprised in his sin and security, and by the just judgment of God dprived of all the opportunity of life and salvation, while he is yet in the land of the living.

But if God be more merciful unto us, and visit us with such a sickness, as leaves us the use of our understandings, yet all that we do in religion at such a time, proceeds from so violent a cause, from the present terror of death, and the dreadful apprehension of that eternal misery which is just ready to swallow us up, that it is one of the hardest things in the world, not only for others, but even for ourselves, to know whether our resolutions, and this sudden and hasty fit of repentance be sincere or not: for it is natural, and almost unavoidable, for a man to repent, and be sorry for what he hath done, when he is going to execution: but the great question is, what this man would do, if his life were spared? whether his repentance would hold good, and he would become a new man, and change his former course of life, or relapse into it again? and it is by no means certain, that he would not be as bad as he was before: because we see many, who, when they lie upon a sick bed give all imaginable testimony of a deep sorrow, and a hearty repentance for their sins, who yet upon their recovery, return to their former sins with a greater appetite, and make themselves "ten times more the children of wrath "than they were before." So that all the work that we can do at such a time, ought not to be much reckoned upon, and can give us little or no comfort; because it is so infinitely uncertain whether it it be real and sincere, and whether the effect of so violent

violent a cauſe would laſt and continue, if the cauſe were removed. Therefore "we ſhould work "while it is day;" for whatever we do in the evening of our lives, will be done with great difficulty, and with very doubtful ſucceſs. SERM. CI.

But beſides this evening, there is "a night coming "when no man can work;" death will ſeize upon us, and then our ſtate will be irrecoverably concluded; after that it will be impoſſible for us to do any thing towards our own ſalvation, or to have any thing done for us by others: the prayers of the living will not avail the dead, "as the tree falls ſo it "lies; there is no wiſdom, nor counſel, nor device "in the grave whither we are going," therefore, according to the counſel of the wiſe man, "what our "hand findeth to do, let us do it with our might."

This counſel concerns all ages and perſons. I will apply it to the young, in the words of the wiſe preacher, Eccleſ. xii. 1. "Remember now thy crea-"tor in the days of thy youth, while the evil days "come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou "ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them." To them who are in the vigour of their age, in the words of the prophet, Iſa. ch. lv. 6. "Seek the LORD while "he may be found, call ye upon him while he is "near." And to them that are old, in the words of another prophet, Jer. xiii. 16. "Give glory to "the LORD your GOD, before he cauſeth darkneſs, "and before your feet ſtumble upon the dark moun-"tains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into "the ſhadow of death, and make it groſs dark-"neſs." And let us every one of us, of what age or condition ſoever, apply it to ourſelves, in the

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words of our bleſſed SAVIOUR here in the text, "I "must work the works of him that ſent me, while "it is day: the night cometh when no man can "work."

SERMON CII.

Of the great duties of natural religion, with the ways and means of knowing them.

MICAH vi. 6, 7, 8.

Wherewith ſhall I come before the LORD, *and bow my ſelf before the high* GOD? *ſhall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old?*

Will the LORD *be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oil? ſhall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul?*

He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD *require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy* GOD?

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IN the beginning of this chapter, the prophet tells the people of Iſrael, "that the LORD had "a controverſy with them;" and that he might direct them how to take up this quarrel, he brings in one making this inquiry in the name of the people; "wherewith ſhall I come before the LORD, "and bow my ſelf before the high GOD?" that is, by what kind of worſhip or devotion may I addreſs my

my ſelf to him in the moſt acceptable manner? by what means may I hope to appeaſe his diſpleaſure? to ſatisfy this enquiry, he firſt inſtanceth in the chief kinds of ſacrifices and expiations that were in uſe among the Jews and Heathens; "ſhall I come be- "fore him with burnt-offerings?" the conſtant ſacrifice that was offered to GOD by way of acknowledgment of his dominion over the creatures; "with "calves of a year old?" which was the ſin-offering which the high-prieſt offered for himſelf. Or will he rather accept of thoſe great and coſtly ſacrifices which were offered upon ſolemn and publick occaſions, ſuch as that was which Solomon offered at the dedication of the temple? "will the LORD be plea- "ſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands "of rivers of oil?" Or if none of theſe will do, ſhall I try to atone him after the manner of the heathen, by the deareſt thing in the world, the firſt-born of my children? "ſhall I give my firſt- "born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body "for the ſin of my ſoul?" if GOD was to be appeaſed at all, ſurely they thought it muſt be by ſome of theſe ways, for beyond theſe they could imagine nothing of greater value and efficacy. SERM. CII.

But the prophet tells them that they were quite out of the way, in thinking to pacify GOD upon theſe terms, that there are other things which are much better and more pleaſing to him than any of theſe ſacrifices. For ſome of them were expreſly forbidden by GOD, "as the offering up of our chil- "dren;" and for the reſt, they were not good in themſelves, but meerly by virtue of their inſtitution, and becauſe they were commanded. But the things

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which he would recommend to them, are such as are good in their own nature, and required of us by GOD upon that account. "He hath shewed thee, "O man, what is good, and what doth the LORD "require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, "and to walk humbly with thy GOD?"

So that in these words you have,

First, an enquiry which is the best way to appease GOD when he is offended; "wherewith shall I come "before the LORD, and bow myself before the "high GOD?"

Secondly, the way that men are apt to take in this case; and that is by some external piece of religion and devotion; such as sacrifice was both among Jews and Heathens. "Shall I come before him with burnt-"offerings, &c." By which questions the prophet intimates that men are very apt to pitch upon this course.

Thirdly, the course which GOD himself directs to, and which will effectually pacify him. "He "hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and "what doth the LORD thy GOD require of thee, &c."

The first being a mere question, there needs no more to be said of it; only that it is a question of great importance; what is the most effectual way to appease GOD when we have offended him? for who can bear his indignation, and who can stand before him, when once he is angry? Let us consider then, in the

Second place, the way that men are apt to take to pacify GOD; and that is by some external piece of religion and devotion, such as were sacrifices among the Jews and Heathens, "shall I come before "him

" him with burnt-offerings?" This is the way which men are moſt apt to chooſe. The Jews, you ſee, pitched upon the external parts of their religion, thoſe which were moſt pompous and ſolemn, the richeſt and moſt coſtly ſacrifices, ſo they might but keep their ſins, they were well enough content to offer up any thing elſe to GOD; they thought nothing too good for him, provided he would not oblige them to become better. SERM. CII.

And thus it is among ourſelves, when we apprehend GOD is diſpleaſed with us, and his judgments are abroad in the earth, we are content to do any thing, but " to learn righteouſneſs;" we are willing to ſubmit to any kind of external devotion and humiliation, to faſt, and pray, to afflict ourſelves and to cry mightily unto GOD; things ſome of them good in themſelves, but the leaſt part of that which GOD requires of us.

And as for the church of Rome, in caſe of publick judgments and calamities, they are the moſt inquiſitive and (as they pretend) the moſt skilful people in the world to pacify GOD; and they have a thouſand ſolemn devices to this purpoſe. I do not wrong them, by repreſenting them enquiring after this manner. "Shall " I go before a crucifix, and bow myſelf to it, as " to the high GOD? And becauſe the LORD is a " great king, and it is perhaps too much boldneſs " and arrogancy to make immediate addreſſes al- " ways to him; to which of the ſaints or angels " ſhall I go to mediate for me, and intercede on " my behalf? Will the LORD be pleaſed with thou- " ſands of pater-noſters, or with ten thouſands of " ave-marys? Shall the hoſt travel in proceſſion, or myſelf

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" myſelf undertake a tedious pilgrimage? Or ſhall " I liſt myſelf a ſoldier for the holy war, or for the " extirpation of hereticks? Shall I give half my " eſtate to a convent for my tranſgreſſion, or chaſtiſe " and puniſh my body for the ſin of my ſoul?" Thus men deceive themſelves, and will ſubmit to all the extravagant ſeverities, that the petulancy and folly of men can deviſe and impoſe upon them. And indeed it is not to be imagined, when men are once under the power of ſuperſtition, how ridiculous they may be, and yet think themſelves religious; how prodigiouſly they may play the fool, and yet believe they pleaſe GOD; what cruel and barbarous things they may do to themſelves and others, and yet be " verily perſuaded they do GOD good ſervice."

And what is the myſtery of all this, but that men are loth to do that without which, nothing elſe that we do is acceptable to GOD? They " hate to be re- " formed;" and for this reaſon, they will be content to do any thing, rather than be put to the trouble of mending themſelves; every thing is eaſy in compariſon of this task, and GOD may have any terms of them, ſo he will let them be quiet in their ſins, and excuſe them from the real virtues of a good life. And this brings me to the

Third thing, which I principally intended to ſpeak to. The courſe which GOD himſelf directs to, and which will effectually pacify him. " He hath ſhewed " thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the " LORD require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to " love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD?" In the handling of which, I ſhall,

Firſt,

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Firſt, conſider thoſe ſeveral duties which GOD here requires of us, and upon the performance of which he will be pacified towards us.

Secondly, by what ways and means GOD hath diſcovered theſe duties to us, and the goodneſs of them; "he hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is "good, &c."

I. We will briefly conſider the ſeveral duties which GOD here requires of us, and upon the performance of which he will be pacified towards us; "What "doth the LORD require of thee, but to do juſtly, "and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy "GOD?"

It was uſual among the Jews to reduce all the duties of religion to theſe three heads, juſtice, mercy, and piety; under the firſt two, comprehending the duties which we owe to one another, and under the third, duties which we owe to GOD.

1. Juſtice. And I was going to tell you what it is, but I conſidered that every man knows it, as well as any definition can explain it to him. I ſhall only put you in mind of ſome of the principal Inſtances of it, and the ſeveral virtues comprehended under it. And,

Firſt, juſtice is concerned in the making of laws; that they be ſuch as are equal and reaſonable, uſeful and beneficial, for the honour of GOD and religion, and for the publick good of human ſociety; this is a great truſt, in the diſcharge of which, if men be biaſſed by favour or intereſt, and drawn aſide from the conſideration and regard of the publick good, it is a far greater crime and of worſe conſequence than any private act of injuſtice between man and man.

And

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And then, juſtice is alſo concerned in the due execution of the laws; which are the guard of private property, the ſecurity of publick peace, and of religion and good manners. And,

Laſtly, in the obſervance of laws and obedience to them; which is a debt which every man owes to humane ſociety.

But more eſpecially juſtice is concerned in the obſervance of thoſe laws, whether of GOD or man, which reſpect the rights of men, and their mutual commerce and intercourſe with one another. That we uſe honeſty and integrity in all our dealings, in oppoſition to fraud and deceit; truth and fidelity, in oppoſition to falſhood and breach of truſt; equity and good conſcience, in oppoſition to all kind of oppreſſion and exaction. Theſe are the principal branches, and inſtances of this great and comprehenſive duty of juſtice; the violation whereof is ſo much the greater ſin, becauſe this virtue is the firmeſt bond of humane ſociety, upon the obſervation whereof, the peace and happineſs of mankind does ſo much depend.

2. Mercy, which does not only ſignify the inward affection of pity and compaſſion towards thoſe that are in miſery and neceſſity, but the effects of it, in the actual relief of thoſe whoſe condition calls for our charitable help and aſſiſtance; by feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, and viſiting the ſick, and vindicating the oppreſſed, and comforting the afflicted, and miniſtring eaſe and relief to them if it be in our power. And this is a very lovely virtue, and argues more goodneſs in men than mere juſtice doth. For juſtice is a ſtrict debt; but mercy is favour

favour and kindneſs. And this perhaps may be the reaſon of the different expreſſions in the text, that when GOD barely commands us "to do juſtly," he requires we ſhould "love mercy," that is, take a particular pleaſure and delight in the exerciſe of this virtue, which is ſo proper and agreeable to mankind, that we commonly call it humanity, giving its name from our very nature. In ſhort, it is ſo excellent a virtue, that I ſhould be very ſorry that any religion ſhould be able to pretend to the practice of it more than our own.

3. Piety; "to walk humbly with thy GOD." "To walk humbly in the fear of the LORD;" ſo the Chaldee paraphraſe renders theſe words. And this phraſe may comprehend all thoſe acts of religion which refer immediately to GOD; a firm belief of his being and perfections; an awful ſenſe of him, as the dread ſovereign and righteous judge of the world; a due regard to his ſervice, and a reverent behaviour of ourſelves towards him in all acts of worſhip and religion, in oppoſition to atheiſm and a prophane neglect and contempt of GOD and religion; a new and monſtrous kind of impiety! which of late years hath broke in upon us, and got head among us, not only contrary to the example of former ages, but in deſpite of the very genius and temper of the nation, which is naturally devout and zealous in religion.

Or elſe this phraſe "of walking humbly with "GOD," may refer more particularly to the poſture and condition of the people of Iſrael at that time, who were fallen under the heavy diſpleaſure of GOD for their ſins. And then the duty required is, that being

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ſenſible how highly GOD hath been offended by us, by the general corruption and vitiouſneſs of the age, which like a leproſy hath ſpread it ſelf almoſt over the whole body of the nation, and by that open lewdneſs and that inſolent impieties which are daily committed amongſt us; I ſay, that being deeply ſenſibly of this, we do with all humility acknowledge our ſins to GOD, and repent of them, and implore his mercy and forgiveneſs, and reſolve by his grace "to turn every one from the evil of our ways," and from "the wickedneſs that is in our hands;" which GOD grant we may every one do * this day, according to the pious deſign and intention of it. And if we be ſincere in this reſolution, "who can tell but "GOD will turn and repent, and turn away his anger "from us, that we periſh not." Nay, we have great reaſon to believe, that he will be pacified towards us. So he hath declared, Iſa. i. 16. "Waſh ye, make "you clean, put away the evil of your doings from "before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do "well, ſeek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed, judge "the fatherleſs, plead for the widow; come now, "and let us reaſon together, ſaith the LORD; though "your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as "ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be "as wooll." But if we continue unreformed, GOD will ſay to us, as he does there to the people of Iſrael, "to what purpoſe is the multitude of your ſacrifices "unto me? your calling of aſſemblies I cannot away "with, it is iniquity, even the ſolemn meeting; and "when ye ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine "eyes from you; when ye make many prayers, I "will not hear." To which let me add that excellent

* *This ſermon was preach'd upon occaſion of a publick faſt.*

lent saying of the son of Sirach to this purpose, Ecclus. SERM. CII.
" xxxiv. 25, 26. " He that washeth himself after
" the touching of a dead body, if he touch it again,
" what availeth his washing? so is it with a man that
" fasteth for his sins, and goeth again and doth the
" same things. Who will hear his prayer, or what
" doth his humbling profit him?"

II. Let us consider by what ways and means GOD hath made known these duties to us, and the goodness and the obligation of them. " He hath shewed,
" thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the
" LORD require of thee?" I shall mention five ways whereby GOD hath discovered this to us.

1. By a kind of natural instinct.
2. By natural reason.
3. By the general vote and consent of mankind.
4. By external revelation.
5. By the inward dictates and motions of GOD'S SPIRIT upon the minds of men.

First, by a kind of natural instinct, by which I mean a secret impression upon the minds of men, whereby they are naturally carried to approve some things as good and fit, and to dislike other things, as having a native evil and deformity in them. And this I call " a natural instinct," because it does not seem to proceed so much from the exercise of our reason, as from a natural propension and inclination, like those instincts which are in brute creatures, of natural affection and care towards their young ones. And that these inclinations are precedent to all reason and discourse about them, evidently appears by this, that they do put forth themselves every whit as vigorously in young persons, as in those of riper

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reaſon; in the rude and ignorant ſort of people, as in thoſe who are more poliſh'd and refin'd. For we ſee plainly that the young and ignorant have as ſtrong impreſſions of piety and devotion, as true a ſenſe of gratitude and juſtice and pity, as the wiſer and more knowing part of mankind. A plain indication, that the reaſon of mankind is prevented by a kind of natural inſtinct and anticipation concerning the good or evil, the comelineſs or deformity of theſe things. And though this do not equally extend to all the inſtances of our duty, yet as to the great lines and eſſential parts of it, mankind hardly need to conſult any other oracle, than the mere propenſions and inclinations of their nature; as, whether we ought to reverence the divine nature, to be grateful to thoſe who have conferred benefits upon us, to ſpeak the truth, to be faithful to our promiſe, to reſtore that which is committed to us in truſt, to pity and relieve thoſe that are in miſery, and in all things to do to others as we would have them do to us. And this would further appear, if we conſider theſe two things.

1. That men are naturally innocent or guilty to themſelves, according to what they do in theſe things. So the apoſtle tells us, Rom. ii. 14, 15. "When "the gentiles which have not the law, do by nature "the things contained in the law, theſe having "not the law, are a law unto themſelves, and do "ſhew the effect of the law written in their hearts, "their conſciences alſo bearing witneſs, and their "thoughts by turns (that is according as they do "well or ill) accuſing or excuſing them." There is a ſecret comfort in innocence, and a ſtrange pleaſure and

and ſatisfaction in being acquitted by our own minds for what we do. But on the contrary, when we contradict theſe natural dictates, what uneaſineſs do we find in our own breaſts? nay even before the fact is committed, our conſcience is ſtrangely diſquieted at the thoughts of it. When a man does but deſign to do a bad thing, he is as guilty to himſelf, as if he had committed it. Of this we have a conſiderable inſtance, in the firſt violence that was offered to nature, Gen. iv. 6. "The LORD ſaid unto Cain, why "art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen?" the very thought of that wickedneſs which he did but then deſign, did diſorder his mind, and make a change in his very countenance. Guilt is the natural concomitant of heinous crimes, which ſo ſoon as ever a man commits, his ſpirit receives a ſecret wound, which cauſeth a great deal of ſmart and anguiſh. For guilt is reſtleſs, and puts the mind of man into an unnatural working and fermentation, never to be ſettled again but by repentance. "The wicked are like "the troubled ſea when it cannot reſt;" which plainly ſhews that the mind of man hath a kind of natural ſenſe of good and evil; becauſe whenever we offend againſt nature, our conſciences are touched to the quick, and we receive a ſting into our ſoul, which ſhoots and pains us, whenever we reflect upon what we have done. I appeal to that witneſs which every man carries in his breaſt, whether this be not true.

2. Men are naturally full of hopes and fears, according as they follow or go againſt theſe natural dictates. A good conſcience is apt to fill men with confidence and good hopes. It does not only give eaſe,

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eaſe, but ſecurity to the mind of man, againſt the dread of inviſible powers, and the fearful apprehenſions of a future judgment. Whereas guilt fills men with diſmal apprehenſions of danger, and continual miſgivings concerning their own ſaftety. Thus it was with Cain after he had ſlain his brother; "it "ſhall come to paſs that every one that findeth me "ſhall ſlay me." Nay, when a man hath done a ſecret fault, which none can accuſe him of, yet then is he haunted with the terrors of his own mind, and cannot be ſecure in his own apprehenſions; which plainly ſhews that men are conſcious to themſelves, when they do well, and when they do amiſs; and that the ſame natural inſtinct which prompts men to their duty, fills them with good hopes when they have done it, and with ſecret fears and apprehenſions of danger when they have done contrary to it.

Secondly, God ſhews men what is good, by natural reaſon; and that two ways; by the convenience of things to our nature; and by their tendency to our happineſs and intereſt.

Firſt, reaſon ſhews us the convenience of things to our nature; and whatever is agreeable to the primitive deſign and intention of nature, that we call "good;" whatever is contrary thereto, we call "evil." For example, "to honour and love God." It is natural to honour great power and perfection, and to love goodneſs wherever it is. So likewiſe, gratitude is natural, to acknowledge benefits received, and to be ready to requite them, and the contrary is monſtrous, and univerſally abhorred; and there is no greater ſign that any thing is contrary to nature, than if it be deteſted by the whole kind. It is agree-

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able also to nature "to be just," and "to do to others, "as we would have them do to us;" for this is to make our own natural inclinations and desires, the rule of our dealing with others; and "to be merciful;" for no man that hath not divested himself of humanity, can be cruel and hard-hearted to others, without feeling a pain in himself. SERM. CII.

Secondly, reason shews us the tendency of these things to our happiness and interest. And indeed the notion of good and evil does commonly refer to the consequences of things, and we call that good, which will bring some benefit and advantage to us, and that evil, which is likely to produce some mischief and inconvenience; and by this rule reason discovers to us that these duties are good.

To begin with piety towards GOD. Nothing can more evidently tend to our interest, than to make him our friend, upon whose favour our happiness depends. So likewise for "gratitude;" it is a virtue, to which if nature did not prompt us, our interest would direct us; for every man is ready to place benefits there where he may hope for a thankful return. Temperance does apparently conduce to our health, which, next to a good conscience, is the most pleasant and valuable thing in the world; whereas the intemperate man is an open enemy to himself, and continually making assaults upon his own life. Mercy and pity are not more welcome to others, than they are delightful and beneficial to ourselves; for we do not only gratify our own nature and bowels, by relieving those who are in misery, but we provoke mankind by our example to the like tenderness, and do prudently bespeak the commiseration

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tion of others towards us, when it ſhall be our turn to ſtand in need of it. And if we be wiſe enough, our reaſon will likewiſe direct us to be juſt, as the ſureſt art of thriving in this world; it gives a man a reputation, which is a powerful advantage in all the affairs of this world; it is the ſhorteſt and eaſieſt way of diſpatching buſineſs, the plaineſt, and leaſt entangled; and though it be not ſo ſudden a way of growing rich, as fraud and oppreſſion; yet it is much ſurer and more laſting, and not liable to thoſe terrible back-blows and after-reckonings, to which eſtates got by injuſtice are.

And natural reaſon does not only ſhew us that theſe things are good, but that "the LORD requires "them of us," that is, that they have the force and obligation of laws. For there needs nothing more to make any thing a law, than a ſufficient declaration, that it is "the will of GOD;" and this GOD hath ſufficiently ſignified to mankind by the very frame of our natures, and of thoſe principles and faculties which he hath endued us withal; ſo that whenever we act contrary to theſe, we plainly diſobey the will of him that made us, and violate thoſe laws which he hath enacted in our natures, and written upon our hearts.

And this is all the law that the greateſt part of mankind were under, before the revelation of the goſpel. From Adam to Moſes, the world was almoſt ſolely governed by the natural law, which ſeems to be the meaning of that hard text, Rom. v. 13. "For until the law ſin was in the world," that is, before the law of Moſes was given, men were capable of offending againſt ſome other law, for otherwiſe

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ſin could not have been imputed to them, for "ſin "is not imputed where there is no law." And then it follows; "nevertheleſs death reigned from Adam "to Moſes, even over them that had not ſinned "after the ſimilitude of Adam's tranſgreſſion;" that is, during that ſpace from Adam to Moſes men ſinned againſt the natural law, and were liable to death upon that account, though they had not offended againſt an expreſs revelation from GOD, as Adam had done; for that the apoſtle ſeems to mean, by "ſinning after the ſimilitude of Adam's tranſ- "greſſion."

Thirdly, GOD hath ſhewn us what is good by the general vote and conſent of mankind. Not that all mankind do agree concerning virtue and vice; but that as to the greater duties of piety, juſtice, mercy, and the like, the exceptions are but few in compariſon, and not enough to infringe a general conſent. And of this I ſhall offer to you this threefold evidence.

1. That theſe virtues are generally prais'd and held in eſteem by mankind, and the contrary vices generally reproved and evil ſpoken of. Now to praiſe any thing, is to give teſtimony to the goodneſs of it, and to cenſure any thing, is to declare that we believe it to be evil. And if we conſult the hiſtory of all ages, we ſhall find that the things which are generally praiſed in the lives of men, and recommended to the imitation of poſterity are piety and devotion, gratitude and juſtice, humanity and charity; and that the contrary to theſe are marked with ignominy and reproach; the former are commended even in enemies, and the latter are branded even by thoſe who

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had a kindneſs for the perſons that were guilty of them. So conſtant hath mankind always been in the commendation of virtue, and in the cenſure of vice. Nay we find not only thoſe who are virtuous themſelves, giving their teſtimony and applauſe to virtue, but even thoſe who are vicious; not out of love to goodneſs, but from the conviction of their own minds, and from a ſecret reverence they bear to the common conſent and opinion of mankind. And this is a great teſtimony, becauſe it is the teſtimony of an enemy extorted by the meer light and force of truth.

And on the contrary; nothing is more ordinary than for "vice to reprove ſin," and to hear men condemn the like, or the ſame things in others, which they allow in themſelves. And this is a clear evidence, that vice is generally condemned by mankind, that many men condemn it in themſelves; and thoſe who are ſo kind as to ſpare themſelves, are very quick-ſighted to ſpy a fault in any body elſe, and will cenſure a bad action done by another, with as much freedom and impartiality, as the moſt virtuous man in the world.

And to this conſent of mankind about virtue and vice, the ſcripture frequently appeals. As when it commands us "to provide things honeſt in the ſight "of all men; and by well-doing to put to ſilence "the ignorance of fooliſh men;" intimating that there are ſome things ſo confeſſedly good, and owned to be ſuch by ſo general a vote of mankind, that the worſt of men have not the face to open their mouths againſt them. And it is made the character of a virtuous action, if it be "lovely, and commen-

"dable,

" dable, and of good report." Philip. iv. 8. " Whatſo- SERM. CII.
" ever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of
" good report, if there be any virtue, if there be
" any praiſe, make account of theſe things ;" intimating to us, that mankind do generally concur in the praiſe and commendation of what is virtuous.

2. Men do generally glory and ſtand upon their innocency, when they do virtuouſly ; but are aſham'd, and out of countenance, when they do the contrary. Now glory and ſhame are nothing elſe but an appeal to the judgment of others concerning the good or evil of our actions. There are indeed ſome ſuch monſters as are impudent in their impieties, but theſe are but few in compariſon. Generally mankind is modeſt, the greateſt part of thoſe who do evil are apt to bluſh at their own faults, and to confeſs them in their countenance, which is an acknowledgment that they are not only guilty to themſelves that they have done amiſs, but that they are apprehenſive that others think ſo. For guilt is a paſſion reſpecting our ſelves, but ſhame regards others. Now it is a ſign of ſhame, that men love to conceal their faults from others, and commit them ſecretly, in the dark and without witneſſes, and are afraid even of a child or a fool : or if they be diſcovered in them, they are ſolicitous to excuſe and extenuate them, and ready to lay the fault upon any body elſe, or to transfer their guilt, or as much of it as they can, upon others. All which are certain tokens, that men are not only naturally guilty to themſelves, when they commit a fault ; but that they are ſenſible alſo what opinions others have of theſe things.

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And on the contrary, men are apt to ſtand upon their juſtification, and to glory when they have done well. The conſcience of a man's own virtue and integrity, lifts up his head and gives him confidence before others, becauſe he is ſatisfied they have a good opinion of his actions. What a good face does a man naturally ſet upon a good deed? and how does he ſneak, when he hath done wickedly, being ſenſible that he is condemned by others, as well as by himſelf? no man is afraid of being upbraided for having dealt honeſtly or kindly with others, nor does he account it any calumny or reproach, to have it reported of him, that he is a ſober and chaſte man. No man bluſheth, when he meets a man with whom he hath kept his word, and diſcharged his truſt: but every man is apt to do ſo, when he meets one with whom he has dealt diſhoneſtly, or who knows ſome notorious crime by him.

3. Vice is generally forbidden and puniſhed by humane laws: but againſt the contrary virtues there never was any law. Some vices are ſo manifeſtly evil in themſelves, or ſo miſchievous to humane ſociety, that the laws of moſt nations have taken care to diſcountenance them by ſevere penalties. Scarce any nation was ever ſo barbarous, as not to maintain and vindicate the honour of their gods and religion by publick laws. Murder and adultery, rebellion and ſedition, perjury and breach of truſt, fraud and oppreſſion, are vices ſeverely prohibited by the laws of moſt nations. A clear indication, what opinion the generality of mankind, and the wiſdom of nations have always had of theſe things.

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But now againſt the contrary virtues there never was any law. No man was ever impeached for "living ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this pre-"ſent world." A plain acknowledgment, that mankind always thought them good, and never were ſenſible of the inconvenience of them; for had they been ſo, they would have provided againſt them by laws. This St. Paul takes notice of as a great commendation of the chriſtian virtues; "the fruit of "the SPIRIT is love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, "gentleneſs, kindneſs, fidelity, meekneſs, tempe-"rance; againſt ſuch there is no law;" the greateſt evidence that could be given, that theſe things are unqueſtionably good in the eſteem of mankind, "againſt ſuch there is no law." As if he had ſaid, turn over the law of Moſes, ſearch thoſe of Athens, and Sparta, and the twelve tables of the Romans, and thoſe innumerable laws that have been added ſince; and you ſhall not in any of them find any of thoſe virtues that I have mentioned, condemned and forbidden. A clear evidence that mankind never took any exception againſt them, but are generally agreed about the goodneſs of them.

Fourthly, GOD hath ſhewn us what is good by external revelation. In former ages of the world, GOD revealed his will to particular perſons in an extraordinary manner, and more eſpecially to the nation of the Jews, the reſt of the world being in a great meaſure left to the conduct of natural light. But in theſe latter ages he hath made publick revelation of his will by his SON. And this as to the matter of our duty, is the ſame in ſubſtance with the law of nature; for our SAVIOUR comprehends all under

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under these two general heads, "the love of GOD, "and of our neighbour." The apostle reduceth all to three, sobriety, justice and piety; "the grace of "GOD that brings salvation hath appeared to all "men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and "worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, "and godly in this present world." So that if we believe the apostle, the gospel teacheth us the very same things which nature dictated to men before; only it hath made a more perfect discovery of them. So that whatever was doubtful and obscure before, is now certain and plain; the duties are still the same, only it offers us more powerful arguments and a greater assistance to the performance of those duties; so that we may now much better say, than the prophet could in his days, "he hath shewed thee, O "man, what is good; and what it is that the LORD "requires of thee."

Fifthly, and lastly, GOD shews us what is good by the motions of his SPIRIT upon the minds of men. This the scripture assures us of, and good men have experience more especially of it; though it be hard to give an account of it, and to say what motions are from the SPIRIT of GOD, and what from our own minds; for "as the wind blows where it listeth, and "we hear the sound of it, but know not whence it "comes, nor whither it goes;" so are the operations of the SPIRIT of GOD upon the minds of men, secret and imperceptible.

And thus I have done with the three things I propounded to speak to. All that now remains, is to make some inferences from what hath been said, by way of application.

First,

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Firſt, ſeeing GOD hath ſo abundantly provided that we ſhould know our duty, we are altogether inexcuſable, if we do not do it. Becauſe "he hath "ſhewed thee, O man, what is good, and what the "LORD requires of thee;" therefore "thou art "inexcuſable, O man, whoſoever thou art," who liveſt in a contradiction to this light. GOD hath acquainted us with our duty, by ſuch ways as may moſt effectually both direct and engage us to the practice of it; we are prompted to it by a kind of natural inſtinct, and ſtrong impreſſions upon our minds of the difference of good and evil; we are led to the knowledge, and urged to the practice of it, by our nature, and by our reaſon, and by our intereſt, and by that which is commonly very prevalent among men, the general voice and conſent of mankind; and by the moſt powerful and governing paſſions in humane nature, by hope and by fear, and by ſhame; by the proſpect of advantage, by the apprehenſion of danger, and by the ſenſe of honour; and to take away all poſſible excuſe of ignorance from us, by an expreſs revelation from GOD, the cleareſt and moſt perfect that ever was made to the world. So that whenever we do contrary to our duty, in any of theſe great inſtances, we offend againſt all theſe, and do in the higheſt degree fall under the heavy ſentence of our SAVIOUR, "this is the condemnation, that light "is come into the world, and men loved darkneſs "rather than light."

Secondly, you ſee hence what are the great duties of religion, which GOD mainly requires of us, and how reaſonable they are; piety towards GOD, and juſtice and charity towards men; the knowledge whereof

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whereof is planted in our nature, and grows up with our reaſon. And theſe are things which are unqueſtionably good, and againſt which we can have no exception; things that were never reproved, nor found fault with by mankind, neither our nature nor our reaſon riſeth up againſt them, or dictates any thing to the contrary. We have all the obligation, and we have all the encouragement to them, and are ſecure on all hands in the practice of them. In the doing of theſe things, there is no danger to us from the laws of men, no fear of diſpleaſure from GOD, no offence or ſting from our own minds.

And theſe things, which are ſo agreeable to our nature, and our reaſon, and our intereſt, are the great things which our religion requires of us, more valuable in themſelves, and more acceptable to GOD than "whole burnt-offerings and ſacrifices," more than "thouſands of rams, and ten thouſands of rivers of oil;" more than if we offered to him "all the beaſts of the foreſt, and the cattle upon a "thouſand hills." We are not to neglect any inſtitution of GOD; but above all, we are to ſecure the obſervance of thoſe great duties to which we are directed by our very nature, and tied by the ſureſt and moſt ſacred of all other laws, thoſe which GOD hath riveted in our ſouls, and written upon our hearts: and that mankind might have no pretence left to excuſe them from theſe, the chriſtian religion hath ſet us free from thoſe many poſitive and outward obſervances, that the Jewiſh religion was incumbred withal; that we might be wholly intent upon theſe great duties, and mind nothing in compariſon of the real and ſubſtantial virtues of a good life.

Thirdly,

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Thirdly, you ſee, in the laſt place, what is the beſt way to appeaſe the diſpleaſure of GOD towards a ſinful nation. GOD ſeems to have as great a controverſy with us, as he had with the people of Iſrael, and his wrath is of late years moſt viſibly gone out againſt us; and proportionably to the full meaſure of our ſins, it hath been poured out upon us in full vials. How have the judgments of GOD followed us? and how cloſe have they followed one another? what fearful calamities have our eyes ſeen? enough to make the ears of every one that hears them to tingle. What terrible and hazardous wars have we been engaged in? what a raging peſtilence did GOD ſend among us, that ſwept away thouſands, and ten thouſands in our ſtreets? what a dreadful and fatal fire, that was not to be checked and reſiſted in its courſe, till it had laid in aſhes one of the greateſt and richeſt cities in the world? what unſeaſonable weather have we had of late? as if for the wickedneſs of men upon the earth, the very "ordinances of heaven were "changed, and ſummer, and winter, ſeed-time, and "harveſt, had forgotten their appointed ſeaſons." And which is more and ſadder than all this, what dangerous attempts have been made upon our religion, by the reſtleſs adverſaries of it?

And now ſurely, "after all this is come upon us "for our ſins," it is time for us to look up to him that ſmites us, and to think of taking up this quarrel. 'Tis time to inquire as they do in the text, "wherewithal ſhall we come before the LORD, and "bow our ſelves before the high GOD?" and we are apt to take the ſame courſe as they did, to endeavour to appeaſe GOD by ſome external devotion. We have

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now betaken our ſelves to prayer and faſting, and 'twas very fit, nay neceſſary we ſhould do ſo; but let us not think this is all GOD expects from us. Theſe are but a means to a further end, to oblige us for the future to the practice of a good life. The outward profeſſion of religion is not loſt amongſt us, there appears ſtill in men a great and commendable zeal for the reformed religion, and there hath been too much occaſion for it; but that which GOD chiefly expects from us, is reformed lives. Piety and virtue are in a great meaſure gone from among us, the manners of men are ſtrangely corrupted, "the great and "weighty things of the law" are neglected, "juſtice "and mercy, temperance and chaſtity, truth and "fidelity," ſo that we may take up David's complaint, "help LORD! for the righteous man ceaſeth, "for the faithful fail from among the children of "men."

And till the nation be brought back to a ſober ſenſe of religion, from an airy and phantaſtical piety, to real and unaffected devotion, and from a factious contention about things indifferent, to the ſerious practice of what is neceſſary; from our violent heats and animoſities, to a more peaceable temper, and by a mutual condeſcenſion on all ſides, to a nearer and ſtronger union among our ſelves, 'till we recover in ſome meaſure our ancient virtue and integrity of manners, we have reaſon to fear, that GOD will ſtill have a controverſy with us, notwithſtanding all our noiſe and zeal about religion.

This is the true, this is the only courſe to appeaſe the indignation of GOD, and to draw down his favour and bleſſing upon a poor diſtracted and gaſping nation.

nation. "He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is "good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, "but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk "humbly with thy God?" SERM. CII.

I have but one word more, and that is to put you preſently upon the practice of one of theſe duties that I have been perſuading you to, and that is "mercy, and alms to the poor." If what I have already ſaid, have had its effect upon you, I need not uſe any other arguments; if it have not, I have hardly the heart to uſe any. I ſhall only put you in mind again, that GOD values this above all our external devotion, "he will have mercy rather than ſa-"crifice;" that this is the way to find mercy with GOD, and to have our prayers ſpeed in heaven; and without this, all our faſting and humiliation ſignifies nothing. And to this purpoſe I will only read to you thoſe plain and perſuaſive words of the prophet, which do ſo fully declare unto us the whole duty of this day, and particularly urge us to this of charity, Iſa. lviii. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. "Is it ſuch a faſt that I have "choſen? a day for a man to afflict his ſoul? is it to "bow down his head as a bulruſh, and to ſpread ſack-"cloth and aſhes under him? wilt thou call this a "faſt, and an acceptable day unto the LORD? is "not this the faſt that I have choſen? to looſe the "bands of wickedneſs, to undo the heavy burdens, and "to let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every "yoke? is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, "and that thou bring the poor that are caſt out to "thy houſe? when thou ſeeſt the naked, that thou "cover him, and that thou hide not thy ſelf from "thine own fleſh? then ſhall thy light break forth as

" the morning, and thy ſalvation ſhall ſpring forth " ſpeedily, and thy righteouſneſs ſhall go before " thee, and the glory of the LORD ſhall be thy rere- " ward. Then thou ſhalt call, and the LORD " ſhall anſwer; thou ſhalt cry, and he ſhall ſay, " here I am."

SERMON CIII.

Inſtituted religion not intended to undermine natural.

MATTHEW ix. 13.

But go ye and learn what that meaneth; I will have mercy, and not ſacrifice.

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ONE of the moſt ſucceſsful attempts that have been made upon religion, by the devil and his inſtruments, hath been by ſetting the laws of GOD at variance with themſelves, and by daſhing the ſeveral parts of religion, and the two tables of the law againſt one another, to break all in pieces; and under a pretence of advancing that part of religion which is inſtituted and revealed, to undermine and deſtroy that which is natural, and of primary obligation.

To manifeſt and lay open the miſchievous conſequences of this deſign, I ſhall at this time (by GOD's aſſiſtance) endeavour to make out theſe two things.

First,

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Firſt, that natural religion is the foundation of all inſtituted and revealed religion.

Secondly, that no revealed or inſtituted religion was ever deſigned to take away the obligation of natural duties, but to confirm and eſtabliſh them.

And to this purpoſe, I have choſen theſe words of our SAVIOUR for the foundation of my following diſcourſe; "but go ye and learn what that meaneth; "I will have mercy, and not ſacrifice." The occaſion of which words was briefly this; the phariſees found fault with him for keeping company, and eating with publicans and ſinners. He owns the thing which they objected to him, and endeavours to vindicate himſelf from any crime or fault in ſo doing; and that, theſe two ways.

1. By telling them, that it was allowed to a phyſician, and proper for his office and profeſſion, to converſe with the ſick, in order to their cure and recovery. He may abſtain, if he pleaſeth, from the converſation of others; but the ſick have need of him, and are his proper care, and his buſineſs and employment lies among them; "he ſaid unto them, "they that be whole need not a phyſician, but they "that are ſick; I came not to call the righteous, "but ſinners to repentance;" they who were already good, needed not to be call'd upon to amend and reform their lives, and they that were ſo conceited of their own righteouſneſs, as the phariſees were, and ſo confident that they were ſound and whole, would not admit of a phyſician, and thereby rendred themſelves incapable of cure; and therefore he did not apply himſelf to them; but to the publicans and ſinners, who were acknowledged on all hands, both by themſelves

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selves and others, to be bad men; so that it could not be denied to be the proper work of a spiritual physician to converse with such persons.

2. By endeavouring to convince them of their ignorance of the true nature of religion, and of the rank and order of the several duties thereby required; "but go ye and learn what that "meaneth; I will have mercy and not sacrifice;" which saying is quoted by him out of the prophet Hosea, chap. vi. 6. "I desired mercy and "not sacrifice; and the knowledge of GOD more "than burnt-offerings;" which text our SAVIOUR cites and applies upon two several occasions; the considering and comparing of which, will give full light to the true meaning of it.

The first is here in the text, upon occasion of the pharisees finding fault with him, for conversing with publicans and sinners; the other is Matth. xii. 7. where the pharisees blaming the disciples of our SAVIOUR for plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, our SAVIOUR tells them, "if he had "known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and "not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the "guiltless;" that is, if they had understood the true nature of religion, and what duties of it are chiefly and in the first place to be regarded, they would not have been so forward to censure this action of his disciples.

So that the plain meaning of this saying is this, that in comparing the parts of religion and the obligation of duties together, those duties which are of moral and natural obligation are most valued by GOD, and ought to take place of those which are positive

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and ritual. "I will have mercy, and not ſacrifice," SERM. CIII.
that is, "rather than ſacrifice," according to the true meaning of this Hebrew phraſe, which is to be underſtood in a comparative ſenſe, as is evident from the text itſelf, in Hoſea, "I deſired mercy, and not "ſacrifice; and the knowledge of GOD rather than "burnt-offerings;" if they cannot be obſerved together, let ſacrifice be neglected, and the work of mercy be done.

And the reaſon of this ſeems very plain; becauſe ſhewing mercy, or doing good in any kind is a prime inſtance of thoſe moral duties, which do naturally and perpetually oblige; but ſacrifice is an inſtance of poſitive and ritual obſervances, and one of the chief of the kind: ſo that when moral duties, and ritual obſervances come in competition, and do claſh with one another, the obſervation of a rite, or poſitive inſtitution, is to give way to a moral duty; and it is no ſin in that caſe to neglect the obſervation of ſuch a rite, yea though it were commanded and appointed by GOD himſelf. And though this may ſeem to be a breach of the letter of the law; yet it is according to the true mind and meaning of the law; it being a tacit condition implied in all laws of a ritual and poſitive nature, provided the obſervance of them be not to the hindrance and prejudice of any duty, which is of a higher and better nature; in that caſe the obligation of it does for that time give way and is ſuſpended.

And this will appear to be the true meaning of this rule, by comparing more particularly the inſtances to which our SAVIOUR applies it. His diſciples paſſing through the corn on the ſabbath-day, and being hungry,

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hungry, pluck'd the ears and did eat; this our SAVIOUR does juſtify to be no breach of the law of the ſabbath; becauſe in that caſe, and in ſuch circumſtances, it did not oblige: for the diſciples being called to attend upon our SAVIOUR to be inſtructed by him in the things which concerned the kingdom of GOD, that is, in the doctrine of the goſpel, which they were to publiſh to the world, this attendance hindred them from making neceſſary proviſions againſt the ſabbath, they, in obedience to their maſter, being intent upon a better work; but that they might not ſtarve, the neceſſities of nature muſt be provided for; and therefore it was fit that the law of the ſabbath, which was but poſitive and ritual, ſhould give way to an act of mercy and ſelf-preſervation; "If ye "had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy "and not ſacrifice, ye would not have condemned "the guiltleſs."

And the reaſon is the ſame as to any inſtrumental part of religion, by which I mean any thing which may be a means to promote piety and goodneſs; as prayer, hearing the word of GOD, keeping good company, and avoiding bad; the duties of this kind, our SAVIOUR here in the text (where he likewiſe applies this rule) compares with moral duties. To avoid the company of vicious and wicked perſons, is a good means to preſerve men from the contagion of their vices, and was always eſteemed a duty among prudent men, both Jews and Heathens, and is no wiſe diſallowed by our SAVIOUR: but yet not ſo a duty, as to hinder a greater duty, nor ſo ſtrictly and perverſely to be inſiſted upon as if one ought not to converſe with bad men in any caſe, or upon any account, no not for ſo great and

good

good an end as to reclaim them from their vices. In this case we ought to consider, that our first and highest obligation is to moral duties, comprehended under "the love of GOD and our neighbour;" among which one of the chief is to do good to men, and to shew mercy and pity to those that are in misery; and the greatest good that one man can do to another, is to be instrumental to reclaim him from the evil and error of his way; because this is "to save his soul from death;" and we cannot imagine that GOD ever intended, by any rule of prudence, or positive constitution of the jewish law, so to forbid their accompanying with bad and scandalous men, that it should be unlawful to converse with them in order to their recovery and amendment; "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will "have mercy and not sacrifice."

And St. Paul was of the same mind in the precepts he gives concerning avoiding the company of scandalous christians, 2 Thes. iii. 14, 15. "And if "any man obey not our word by this epistle, note "that man, and have no company with him, that he "may be ashamed; yet count him not as an enemy, "but admonish him as a brother." St. Paul qualifies his precept, lest christians should mistake it, and fall into the jewish extreme, not to converse with those whom they esteemed scandalous and wicked upon any account whatsoever, no not in order to their amendment and reformation. The bond of intimacy and friendship with bad men ought to be broken, and yet the bond of common humanity may be as strong as ever. It is one thing to discountenance bad men, to bring them to shame, and

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a sense of their fault; and quite another thing to abandon them to ruin; and even in case of notorious heresy, or wickedness of life, it is one thing to cut them off from the society and communion of christians; and quite another, to cut them off from humane society, to cut their throats, and to extirpate them out of the world.

And yet the matter was carried thus far by the furious zeal of the Jews, when christianity first appeared in the world; they thought that no mercy in such cases was the best service that could be done, and the best sacrifice that could be offered to almighty GOD; and this pattern hath been since, not only closely followed, but out-done by the doctrines and practices of the church of Rome; as we have too much reason to remember upon * this day.

But to proceed in the farther explication of the text, the meaning whereof in short is this; that the ritual and instrumental parts of religion, and all laws and duties concerning them, are of less value and esteem with GOD, than those which are of a moral nature, especially the great duties and offices of piety and humanity, of the love of GOD, and of our neighbour. And if we consider the matter well, we shall see the reason of it to be very plain; because natural and moral duties are approved of GOD, for themselves and for their own sake upon account of their own natural and intrinsical goodness; but the ritual and instrumental parts of religion are only pleasing to GOD in order to these, and so far as they tend to beget and promote them in us; they are not naturally good in themselves, but are instituted and

* *Preached on* NOV. 5, 1688.

appointed

appointed by GOD for the ſake of the other; and therefore great reaſon there is that they ſhould be ſubordinate, and give way to them when they come in competition with one another. SERM. CIII.

For this is a known rule, which takes place in all laws, "that laws of leſs importance ſhould give "way to thoſe that are of greater;" *quoties leges ex circumſtantiâ colliduntur, ita ut utraque ſervari non poteſt, ſervanda eſt lex potior.* "Whenever two laws "happen to be in ſuch circumſtances as to claſh "with one another, ſo that both of them cannot be "obſerved, that law which is better and of greater "conſequence is to be kept." And Tully gives much the ſame rule in this matter. "In comparing "of laws (ſays he) we are to conſider which law is "moſt uſeful, and juſt, and reaſonable to be ob-"ſerved." From whence it will follow, that when two laws, or more, or how many ſoever they be, cannot be obſerved, becauſe they claſh with one another; *ea maximè conſervanda putetur, quæ ad maximas res pertinere videatur.* "It is reaſonable that that "law ſhould be obſerved, which is of greateſt mo-"ment and concernment."

By what hath been ſaid, we may learn what is the meaning of this ſaying, which our SAVIOUR more than once cites out of the prophet, "I will "have mercy, and not ſacrifice."

From the words thus explained, I ſhall take occaſion to proſecute the two propoſitions which I mentioned before, namely,

Firſt, that natural religion is the foundation of inſtituted and revealed religion.

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Secondly, that no inſtituted religion was ever deſigned to take away the obligation of natural duties; but is intended to eſtabliſh and confirm them. And both theſe are ſufficiently grounded in the reaſon of our SAVIOUR's diſcourſe from this rule, "I will "have mercy, and not ſacrifice."

I. That natural religion is the foundation of inſtituted and revealed religion; and all revealed religion does ſuppoſe, and take for granted, the clear and undoubted principles and precepts of natural religion, and builds upon them. By natural religion, I mean obedience to the natural law, and the performance of ſuch duties as natural light, without any expreſs and ſupernatural revelation, doth dictate to men. Theſe lie at the bottom of all religion, and are the great and fundamental duties which GOD requires of all mankind; as, that we ſhould love GOD, and behave ourſelves reverently towards him; that we ſhould believe his revelations; and teſtify our dependence upon him, by imploring his aid and direction in all our neceſſities and diſtreſſes; and acknowledge our obligations to him for all the bleſſings and benefits which we receive; that we ſhould moderate our appetites, in reference to the pleaſures and enjoyments of this world, and uſe them temperately and chaſtly; that we ſhould be juſt and upright in all our dealings with one another; true to our word, and faithful to our truſt; and in all our words and actions obſerve that equity towards others, which we deſire they ſhould uſe towards us; that we ſhould be kind, and charitable, merciful, and compaſſionate one towards another; ready to do good to all, and apt not only to pity, but to relieve them

them in their misery and necessity. These, and such like, are those which we call moral duties; and they are of eternal and perpetual obligation, because they do naturally oblige, without any particular and express revelation from GOD. And these are the foundation of revealed and instituted religion, and all revealed religion does suppose them, and build upon them; for all revelation from GOD, supposeth us to be men, and alters nothing of those duties to which we were naturally obliged before. And this will clearly appear if we consider these three things;

First, that the scripture every where speaks of these, as the main and fundamental duties of the jewish religion.

Secondly, that no instituted service of GOD, no positive part of religion, was ever acceptable to him, when these were neglected.

Thirdly, that the great design of the christian religion, was to restore and reinforce the practice of the natural law.

1. That the scripture every where speaks of these as the main and fundamental duties of the jewish religion. When our SAVIOUR was ask'd "which "was the first and great commandment of the "law;" he answered, "thou shalt love the LORD "thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy "soul, and with all thy strength; and thou shalt "love thy neighbour as thy self." One would have expected he would have given quite another answer, and have pitched upon some of those things which were so much magnified among the Jews, and which they laid so much weight upon; that he should have instanced in sacrifice, or circumcision, or the

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the law of the ſabbath: but he overlooks all theſe as inconſiderable in compariſon, and inſtances only in thoſe two great heads of moral duty, "the love "of GOD, and our neighbour;" which are of natural and perpetual obligation, and comprehend under them all other moral duties.

And theſe are thoſe which our SAVIOUR calls "the law and the Prophets," and which he ſays "he came not to deſtroy, but to fulfil," Matth. v. 17, 18, 19, 20. "Think not that I am come to deſtroy "the law or the prophets. I am not come to de- "ſtroy; but to fulfil: for verily I ſay unto you, 'till "heaven and earth paſs, one jot or one tittle ſhall in "no wiſe paſs from the law 'till all be fulfilled. Who- "ſoever therefore ſhall break one of theſe leaſt com- "mandments, and ſhall teach men ſo, he ſhall be "called the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven; but "whoſoever ſhall do and teach them, the ſame ſhall "be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I "ſay unto you, that except your righteouſneſs ſhall "exceed the righteouſneſs of the ſcribes and phari- "ſees, ye ſhall in no caſe enter into the kingdom of "heaven."

That our SAVIOUR doth not here ſpeak of the judicial or ceremonial law of the Jews, but of the duties of the moral law, will, I think, be very plain, from theſe following conſiderations.

Firſt, that the judicial or ceremonial laws of the Jews were to paſs away, and did ſo, not long after; but this law which our SAVIOUR ſpeaks of, was to be perpetual and immutable; for he tells us, "that "heaven and earth ſhould paſs away, but one jot or "one tittle of this law ſhould not paſs."

Secondly,

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Secondly, the obſervation of the law which our SAVIOUR ſpeaks of, conſiſted in ſuch things as the ſcribes and phariſees neglected; for he tells his diſciples, upon this occaſion, "that except their righte-"ouſneſs did exceed the righteouſneſs of the ſcribes "and phariſees, they ſhould in no caſe enter into the "kingdom of heaven." But now the ſcribes and phariſees were the moſt accurate and punctual people in the world, in obſerving the precepts of the judicial and ceremonial law, they were ſo far from taking away any thing from theſe obſervances, that they had added to them, and enlarged them, by innumerable traditions of their own: ſo exact were they, that they would "pay tithe of mint, and aniſe, "and cummin," as our SAVIOUR obſerves; but then they were extremely defective in moral duties; they were unnatural to their parents, and would pretend that their eſtates were conſecrated to GOD, that under this pretence of poſitive religion, they might excuſe themſelves from a natural duty, and let their parents ſtarve for GOD's ſake; they were covetous, and unjuſt, and devoured widows houſes; in a word, our SAVIOUR tells us, they neglected "the weightier "matters of the law, mercy, judgment, and the "love of GOD, and keeping faith with men;" ſo that it is in theſe things, that our SAVIOUR means, "that our righteouſneſs muſt exceed the righteouſ-"neſs of the ſcribes and phariſees," viz. in the practice of moral duties, which were neglected by them; and conſequently 'tis the moral law which our SAVIOUR came to confirm and eſtabliſh.

Thirdly, if we conſider the inſtances which our SAVIOUR gives in his following diſcourſe, by which

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we may best judge what he means. He instances in murder, and adultery, and perjury, which are undoubtedly forbidden by the natural law; and then he instances in several permissions which were indulged to them for the hardness of their hearts, but yet did intrench upon the dictates of right reason, and the first and original constitution of things; as the permission of divorce upon every slight occasion, and of revenge, and retaliation of injuries.

Fourthly, if we consider that by the law and the prophets, our SAVIOUR means that which was principally designed and ultimately intended by them; which was the observation of moral duties; which as they were written in the two tables by the immediate finger of GOD himself, so are chiefly inculcated by the prophets. And so we find this phrase of "the law "and the prophets," elsewhere used by our SAVIOUR, when he mentions that great rule of equity, "that "we should do to others as we would have them "do to us." Matth. vii. 12. "Therefore all things "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, "do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the "prophets." But how was "this the law and the "prophets," when this rule was never so much as mentioned in either? our SAVIOUR means, that this is the foundation of all those duties of justice and mercy, which are so much inculcated in "the law "and the prophets."

So that our SAVIOUR makes the observation of moral duties to be the principal design of the jewish law, and as it were the foundation of it, and therefore he calls moral duties, τὰ βαρύτερα τῦ νόμυ, "the weightier matters of the law," Matth. xxiii.

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23. "But ye (says he to the scribes and pharisees) "have neglected the weightier things of the law, "judgment, and mercy, and fidelity." The scribes and pharisees busied themselves chiefly about ritual observances; but our SAVIOUR tells them, that those other were the most considerable and important duties of the law, and lay at the bottom of the jewish religion. And much the same enumeration the prophet makes, where he compares sacrifices and these moral duties together, Mic. vi. 6, 7, 8. "Wherewith shall "I come before the LORD, and bow my self before "the high GOD? shall I come before him with burnt-"offerings, with calves of a year old? will the "LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with "ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my "first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my "body for the sin of my soul? he hath shewed thee, "O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD "require of thee, but to do justly, and to love "mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD?" he had required sacrifices but had no regard to them in comparison with these.

II. No instituted service of GOD, no positive part of religion whatsoever, was ever acceptable to GOD, when moral duties were neglected; nay, so far from being acceptable to him, that he rejects them with disdain and abhorrence. To this purpose there are almost innumerable passages in the prophets; Isa. i. 11, &c. "To what purpose is the multitude of your "sacrifices unto me? when ye come to appear before "me, who hath required this at your hands, to "tread my courts? bring no more vain oblations; "incense is an abomination to me; the new moons

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" and ſabbaths, the calling of aſſemblies, I cannot " away with; it is iniquity, even the ſolemn meet- " ing, and when ye ſpread forth your hands, I " will hide mine eyes from you; when ye make " many prayers, I will not hear." What is the reaſon of all this? Becauſe they were defective in the moral duties of religion; ſo it follows; " your " hands are full of blood; waſh ye, make ye " clean, put away the evil of your doings from be- " fore mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, " ſeek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed, judge the " fatherleſs, plead for the widow; come now and " let us reaſon together, ſaith the LORD;" implying that till they had reſpect to moral duties, all their external worſhip and ſacrifices ſignified nothing. And ſo likewiſe, Iſa. lxvi. 3. he tells them that nothing could be more abominable than their ſacrifices, ſo long as they allowed themſelves in wicked practices; " he that killeth an ox is as if he ſlew a " man; he that ſacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off " a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if " he offered ſwine's blood; and he that burneth in- " cenſe, as if he bleſſed an idol; yea, they have " choſen their own ways, and their ſoul delighteth " in their abominations." And to mention but one text more out of the old teſtament, Jer. vii. 4, 5. " Truſt ye not in lying words, ſaying, the temple " of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the tem- " ple of the LORD are theſe. Throughly amend " your ways and your doings, throughly execute " judgment between a man and his neighbour; " oppreſs not the ſtranger, the fatherleſs and the " widow, and ſhed not innocent blood." If they did not practiſe theſe duties, and forbear thoſe ſins,

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all the reverence for the temple and the worſhip of GOD ſignifies nothing. You ſee in the jewiſh religion what it was that was acceptable to GOD for its ſelf and its own ſake, viz. the practice of moral duties; and that all inſtituted religion, that did not promote and further theſe, or was deſtitute of them, was abominable to GOD. And under the goſpel our SAVIOUR prefers a moral duty before any gift we can offer to GOD, and will have it to take place, Matth. v. 23, 24. "If thou bring thy gift unto "the altar, and there remembreſt that thy brother "hath ought againſt thee, leave there thy gift be- "fore the altar, and go thy way, firſt be recon- "ciled to thy brother, and then come and offer "thy gift." SERM. CIII.

But it ſhould ſeem by this, and what hath been ſaid before, that GOD prefers goodneſs and righteouſneſs to men, before his own worſhip, and obedience to the precepts of the ſecond table, before obedience to thoſe of the firſt.

But this does but ſeem ſo; all that can be collected from this paſſage of our SAVIOUR, or any thing that hath been already ſaid, are only theſe two things,

1. That GOD prefers the practice of the moral duties of the ſecond table, before any inſtituted worſhip, ſuch as ſacrifice was; and before obedience to the laws of religion, which are meerly poſitive, tho' they do immediately concern the worſhip of GOD.

2. That if we neglect the duties of the ſecond table, of goodneſs and righteouſneſs towards men, GOD will not accept of our obedience to the pre-

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cepts of the firſt, nor of any act of religious worſhip that we can perform. This our SAVIOUR means when he ſays, "leave there thy gift before "the altar, firſt be reconciled to thy brother, then "come and offer thy gift;" intimating, that ſo long as we bear a revengeful mind towards our brethren, GOD will not accept of any gift or ſacrifice that we can offer to him; or indeed of any act of religious worſhip that we can perform.

Thirdly, the great deſign of the chriſtian religion is to reſtore and reinforce the practice of the natural law, or which is all one, of moral duties; and therefore our SAVIOUR begins his firſt ſermon, by promiſing bleſſedneſs to the practice of theſe duties; of purity, and meekneſs, and righteouſneſs and peaceableneſs, and mercifulneſs, and patience, and ſubmiſſion to the will of GOD under perſecutions and ſufferings for righteouſneſs ſake; and tells us (as I ſhewed before) that he came not to releaſe men from the practice of theſe duties, but to oblige them thereto more effectually; and that as theſe were the "law and the prophets," that is, the main duties and the foundation of the jewiſh religion, ſo were they much more to be ſo of the chriſtian. This the ſcriptures of the new teſtament do every where declare to be the great deſign of the goſpel, and the chriſtian religion, to inſtruct us in theſe duties, and to engage us effectually to the practice of them. In that known and excellent text, Tit. ii. 11, 12. "The grace of "GOD (which is in and by the doctrine of the "goſpel) hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that "denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould "live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent "world."

" world." And herein St. James tells us, the true nature, and the force and virtue of the christian religion doth consist, James i. 27. " pure religion, and " undefiled before GOD and the FATHER is this, to " visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, " and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world." And chap. iii. 17. " The wisdom which is from " above" (that is, that heavenly and divine knowledge revealed to us by the gospel) hath these properties, and is apt to produce these effects; " it is " first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, and easy " to be intreated, full of mercy, and of good " fruits." SERM. CIII.

And the planting of these dispositions in us is that which the scripture calls " the new creature, and the " image of GOD," Eph. iv. 20, &c. The apostle speaking there of the vices and lusts wherein the gentiles lived, tells christians that they were otherwise instructed by the gospel; " but you have not " so learned CHRIST, if so be that ye have heard " him, and have been taught by him, as the truth " is in JESUS, that ye put off concerning the for- " mer conversation the old man which is corrupt " according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in " the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the " new man, which after GOD is created in righteous- " ness, and true holiness," or, (as the words perhaps may better be rendred) " in the holiness of truth;" for it immediately follows, " wherefore putting away " lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour."

And this is that which the apostle elsewhere makes to be all in all in the christian religion. " In " CHRIST JESUS, neither circumcision availeth any " thing,

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" thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," Gal. vi. 15. which the apostle in the chapter before expresseth thus; " in CHRIST JESUS neither circum- " cision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but " faith which worketh (or is inspired) by charity." And yet more expresly, 1 Cor. vii. 19. " circumci- " sion is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; " but the keeping of the commandments of GOD." By the comparing of which texts, it appears, that the main thing in christianity is the practice of moral duties, and this is " the new creature," and this the proper effect of the christian faith to produce these virtues in us. And indeed the great design of the christian religion and every thing in it, of the love of GOD in giving his SON to die for us, of the pardon of our sins, and justification in his blood, of all the promises and threatnings of the gospel, and of the assistance therein promised, is to engage, and encourage and enable to the practice of moral duties.

And thus I have done with the first thing I proposed to speak to, namely, that natural religion is the foundation of instituted and revealed religion; and all revealed religion does suppose it, and builds upon it. I proceed to the

Second, namely, that no revealed and instituted religion was ever designed to take away the obligation of natural duties, but was intended to confirm and establish them. And this also will be evident, if we consider these three things.

1. That all revealed religion calls men to the practice of natural Duties. This the jewish religion did. The first laws which GOD gave them, and which he distinguished

distinguished from the rest, by writing them in tables of stone with his own finger, were the precepts of the moral law. And the great business of the prophets whom GOD raised up among them from time to time, was to reprove not so much their defects in their sacrifices, and in the duties of instituted worship, as the breach of the natural law by their vices and immoralities; and to threaten them with the judgments of GOD, if they did not reform and amend their faults.

And now under the gospel, the preceptive part of it is almost wholly made up of moral duties, namely, those which are comprehended under those two great commandments, "of the love of GOD, "and our neighbour." In the christian religion, there is very little that is merely positive and instituted, besides "the two sacraments, and praying "to GOD in the name and mediation of JESUS "CHRIST."

2. The most perfect revelation that ever GOD made to mankind (I mean that of the christian religion) doth furnish us with the best helps and advantages for the performance of moral duties; it discovers our duty more clearly to us; it offers us the greatest assistance to enable us to the performance of it; it presents us with the most powerful motives and arguments to engage us thereto; so that this revelation of the gospel is so far from weakening the obligation of natural duties, that it confirms and strengthens it, and urgeth us more forcibly to the practice of them.

3. The positive rites and institutions of revealed religion are so far from entrenching upon the laws of

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of nature, that they were always deſigned to be ſubordinate and ſubſervient to them; and whenever they come in competition, it is the declared will of GOD, that poſitive inſtitutions ſhould give way to natural duties, and this I have ſhewn to be plainly the meaning of this ſaying in the text, "I will "have mercy, and not ſacrifice." If circumſtances be ſuch, that one part of religion muſt give place, GOD will have the ritual and inſtituted part to give way to that which is natural and moral.

It is very frequent in ſcripture, when the duties of natural religion, and rites of divine inſtitution come in competition, to ſlight and diſparage theſe in compariſon of moral duties, and to ſpeak of them as things which GOD hath no pleaſure in, and which in compariſon of the other he will hardly own that he hath commandcd. "When ye come to appear "before me, who hath required this at your hands." Iſa. i. 12. "Thou deſireſt not ſacrifice, thou de-"lighteſt not in burnt-offerings," Pſal. li. 16. "Will "the LORD be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or "ten thouſands of rivers of oil? he hath ſhewed "thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the "LORD require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to "love mercy."

But GOD no where makes any compariſon to the diſadvantage of natural duties; he never derogated from them in any caſe; he never ſaid "he would "have ſuch a thing, and not mercy," or "that he "hath rather ſuch a rite of religion ſhould be per-"formed, than that men ſhould do the greateſt "good, and ſhew the greateſt charity to one another." It is no where made a queſtion, "will the LORD "be

" be pleaſed that we deal juſtly every man with his " neighbour, and ſpeak the truth one to another? " that we be kind and tender-hearted, and ready to " forgive? that we be willing to diſtribute and give " alms to thoſe that are in need?" there is no ſuch queſtion as this put in ſcripture; nay it is poſitive in theſe matters, that " with ſuch ſacrifices GOD is " well pleaſed." I inſtance in this virtue more eſpecially of kindneſs and compaſſion, becauſe it is one of the prime inſtances of moral duties; as ſacrifice is put for all the ritual and inſtituted part of religion, and this diſpoſition of mind our SAVIOUR makes the root of all moral duties, " love is the fulfilling of " the law;" and the apoſtle ſpeaks of it as the great end and ſcope of the goſpel; " the end of " the commandment is charity." And this temper and diſpoſition of mind he advanceth above knowledge, and faith, and hope; " the greateſt of theſe " is charity:" and without this, he will not allow a man to be any thing in chriſtianity; this he makes our higheſt perfection and attainment, and that which abides and remains in the future ſtate; " cha- " rity never fails." SERM. CIII.

This our SAVIOUR moſt effectually recommends to us, both in his doctrine, and by his example; this he preſſeth as a peculiar law of his religion, and the proper mark and character of a diſciple. This he requires us to exerciſe towards thoſe who practiſe the contrary towards us; " to love our ene- " mies, and to do good to them that hate us." And of this, he hath given us the greateſt example that ever was; " when we were enemies to him," he loved us ſo as hardly ever any man did his friend,

7.

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ſo as " to lay down his life for us ;" and he inſtituted the ſacrament for a memorial of his love to mankind, and to put us in mind how we ought to love one another.

And now the application of what hath been ſaid upon this argument, to the occaſion of this day, is very obvious, and there are two very natural inferences from it.

Firſt, from what hath been ſaid upon this argument, it plainly appears what place natural and moral duties ought to have in the chriſtian religion ; and of all natural duties, " mercy, and goodneſs." This is ſo primary a duty of humane nature ; ſo great and conſiderable a part of religion, that all poſitive inſtitutions muſt give way to it, and nothing of that kind can cancel the obligation of it, nor juſtify the violation of this great and natural law. Our bleſſed SAVIOUR in his religion hath declared nothing to the prejudice of it ; but on the contrary hath heightned our obligation to it, as much as is poſſible, by telling us that " the SON of man came " not to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them."

So that " they know not what manner of ſpirit " they are of, who will kill men to do GOD ſer- " vice ;" and to advance his cauſe and religion in the world, will break through all obligations of nature, and civil ſociety, and diſturb the peace and happineſs of mankind.

Nor did our SAVIOUR by any thing in his religion deſign to releaſe men from the obligation of natural and civil duties. He had (as one would imagine) as much power as the pope ; but yet he depoſed none of the princes of this world, nor did abſolve

abſolve their ſubjects from their fidelity and obedience to them, for their oppoſition to his religion; he aſſumed no ſuch power to himſelf (no not *in ordine ad ſpiritualia*) nor, that ever we read of, did he give it to any other. Whence then comes his pretended vicar to have this authority? And yet the horrid attempt of this day was firſt deſigned, and afterwards carried on, in proſecution of the pope's bull of excommunication, and was not ſo much the effect of the deſpair and diſcontent of that party here in England, as the natural conſequence of their doctrines of "extirpating hereticks, and depoſing "kings, and abſolving ſubjects from their allegi- "ance to them."

No zeal for any poſitive inſtitution in religion, can juſtify the violation of the natural law, the precepts whereof are of primary and indiſpenſable obligation. The pope's ſupremacy is not ſo clear, as the duty of "obedience to civil government;" nor is tranſubſtantiation ſo plainly revealed in ſcripture, as it is both in nature and ſcripture, that we ſhould "do no murder." And yet how many thouſands have been put to death, becauſe they could not underſtand this hard word, and believe this impoſſible thing! and yet if the ſupremacy of the pope were clearly of divine right, and the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation as plain as the inſtitution of the ſacrament; yet theſe being but poſitive matters in religion, there would be no reaſon to kill men for not underſtanding and believing theſe things; nay it would be contrary to religion to do it; becauſe the law of mercy and humanity, which is the law of nature, ought not to be violated for the promoting

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of any poſitive inſtitution; and GOD hath plainly ſaid, "that he will have mercy rather than ſacri-"fice;" yea rather than the ſacrifice of the maſs, if it were what they pretend it is, the offering of the natural body and blood of CHRIST; becauſe it would be needleſs: for propitiation of ſin being once made by "CHRIST's offering himſelf once for "all" upon the croſs; "there needs no more ſa-"crifice for ſin." Nay, I will go further yet; I had rather never adminiſter the ſacrament, nor ever receive it, than take away any man's life about it; becauſe the ſacrament is but a poſitive rite and inſtitution of the chriſtian religion, and GOD prefers mercy, which is a duty of natural religion, before any rite or inſtitution whatſoever. Beſides, that all acts of malice and cruelty are directly contrary to the particular nature and deſign of this bleſſed ſacrament, which is to commemorate the ſufferings of the SON of GOD for our ſakes, and to give us an example of the greateſt love that ever was, and thereby to excite us to the imitation of it.

2. What hath been ſaid gives us a right notion and character of that church and religion, which prefers the poſitive rites and inſtitutions of religion, and the obſervance of them, to thoſe duties which are of natural and eternal obligation, mercy and goodneſs, fidelity and juſtice; and which for the ſake of a pretended article of religion, or rite of worſhip, (which if it were certain that they were revealed, and inſtituted by GOD are yet merely poſitive) will break the greateſt of God's commandments, and teach men ſo.

It

It is too plain to be denied, that the principles and precepts of natural religion were never ſo effectually undermined, and the morality of the chriſtian religion never ſo intolerably corrupted and debauched, by any thing that ever had the face of religion in the world, as by the allowed doctrines and practices of the church of Rome, and this out of a blind and furious zeal for ſome imaginary doctrines and rites of the chriſtian religion, which at the beſt are of meer poſitive inſtitution, and of the ſame rank among chriſtians, that ſacrifices were in the jewiſh religion. For which we need go no further for an inſtance, than in the occaſion of this day's ſolemnity; upon which day, (about fourſcore years ago) there was deſigned a mighty ſacrifice indeed, the greateſt and richeſt burnt-offering that ever was pretended to be offered up to almighty GOD, by thoſe of any religion whatſoever; not "the blood "of bulls and goats," but of king, and princes, and nobles more in value, than "thouſands of rams, "and ten thouſands of rivers of oil; than all the "beaſts of the foreſt, and the cattle upon a thou-"ſand hills,"

Here was a prodigious ſacrifice indeed; but where was mercy? the thing GOD chiefly deſires, and which above all other things is acceptable to him; no mercy, not even to thoſe of their own religion, whom theſe nice and tender caſuiſts, after a ſolemn debate of the caſe, had reſolved to involve in the ſame common deſtruction with the reſt; rather no mercy, than that this ſacrifice which their mad zeal had prompted them to, ſhould be omitted.

To

To conclude, they that can do ſuch inhumane things, and think them to be religion, do not underſtand the nature of it, but had need to be taught the firſt rudiments of natural religion; that natural duties are not to be violated upon pretence, no, not for the ſake of poſitive inſtitutions; becauſe natural religion is the foundation of that which is inſtituted; and therefore to violate any natural duty for the ſake of that which is inſtituted, is for religion to undermine and blow up itſelf. Let thoſe who do ſuch things, and teach men ſo, "go and learn what "that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not ſacrifice."

SERMON CIV.

Chriſtianity doth not deſtroy, but perfect the law of Moſes.

MATTHEW v. 17.

Think not that I am come to deſtroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil.

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The firſt ſermon on this text.

THERE is no ſaying in the whole goſpel, which the Jews did ſo frequently object to the chriſtians as this of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, as if his words and actions were plainly repugnant, and contrary to one another: for when it is evident, ſay they, that he took away ſo many ceremonies, purifications, diſtinctions of meats, ſacrifices, judicial laws, and many other things; yet he ſays, "he came not to deſtroy the law or the prophets;"

ſo

ſo that it is plain, that he did throw down the law of Moſes, and in ſo doing contradicted his own saying, that he did not intend "to deſtroy the law." To clear our SAVIOUR's words of this objection, it will be requiſite to conſider the ſcope and deſign of his diſcourſe in this chapter; by which we ſhall fully underſtand the ſenſe and meaning of theſe words in the text. SERM. CIV.

Our SAVIOUR in this ſermon, (which contains the ſum and ſubſtance of his religion) doth earneſtly recommend to his diſciples and followers, and ſtrictly enjoins the perfect practice of all goodneſs and virtue, declaring to them, that he came to bring in and eſtabliſh that righteouſneſs, which the jewiſh religion indeed aimed at, but through the weakneſs and imperfection of that diſpenſation, was not able to effect and accompliſh. And to take away all ſuſpicion of a deſign, to contradict the former revelations of GOD, made to the Jews by Moſes and the prophets, or to deſtroy their divine authority, by carrying on a deſign contrary to them, I ſay, to prevent any imagination of this kind, he does here in the text expreſly declare the contrary; "Think "not, &c." intimating that ſome either did, or at leaſt might be apt to ſuſpect, that his deſign was to deſtroy the obligation of the law, and to undermine the authority of Moſes and the prophets; to free them from this jealouſy, he declares plainly, that he had no ſuch thought and intention, it was far from him.

"I come not to deſtroy, καταλῦσαι, to abro-"gate or diſſolve the law," to encourage men to the breach and violation of it; for the word is of the

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the ſame ſenſe with λύειν, at the 19th verſe, "whoſoever ſhall break one of theſe leaſt commandments;" and with καταργῆσαι, Rom. iii. 31. νόμον οὖν καταργοῦμεν, "do we then make void the "law by faith?" which is the ſame queſtion with that of the ſame apoſtle, Gal. iii. 21. "Is the law then "againſt the promiſes of GOD?" that is, "are the "law and the goſpel contrary? do they contradict "one another;" ſo that the meaning of our SAVIOUR's declaration is this, that he was not come to diſſolve, and abrogate, and make void the law, or to encourage men to the breach of it; that the precepts of his religion were in no wiſe contrary to thoſe of the law and the prophets, did not thwart and oppoſe them, or any ways contradict the main deſign and intention of the law and the prophets; that is, of the jewiſh religion; for ſo the law and the prophets do frequently ſignify, Matth. vii. 12. "Therefore all things whatſoever ye would that men 'ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them; for 'this is the law and the prophets;" that is, this is the main ſcope and intention of what your religion, contained "in the law and the prophets," teacheth, concerning your duty to one another. So likewiſe, Matth. xxii. 40. "On theſe two commandments "hang all the law and the prophets;" that is, this is the ſum of all the duties of religion; to theſe two laws, all that the jewiſh religion teacheth, may be refer'd. "I am not come to deſtroy but to fulfil;" to carry on the ſame deſign which was intended by the jewiſh religion, and to perfect and accompliſh it; to ſupply all the defects and weakneſſes and imperfections of that diſpenſation; this is the plain meaning

ing of this caution and declaration of our SAVIOUR's; "think not, &c." SERM. CIV.

For the clearing of this matter, viz. that the deſign of our SAVIOUR's doctrine and religion, is not contrary to thoſe former revelations, which GOD made to the Jews by Moſes and the prophets; this will evidently appear, whether we conſider the propheſies and predictions of the old teſtament, or the laws and precepts therein contained.

Firſt, the propheſies and predictions of the old teſtament; our SAVIOUR came not to contradict and overthrow theſe; but to fulfil them. The chief predictions of the law and the prophets were concerning the MESSIAS, and his ſpiritual kingdom. In the law it was foretold, "that GOD would raiſe to "them a prophet like unto Moſes, whom they "ought to hear and obey; and to him all the pro-"phets of the old teſtament gave witneſs," foretelling the time of his coming, his extraction, the manner and circumſtances of his birth, the purity and efficacy of his doctrine, the actions and miracles of his life, his paſſion, death, and burial, with the particular circumſtances of them, his reſurrection from the dead, and his aſcenſion into heaven, and exaltation at the right hand of GOD; ſo that this part of the law and prophets he did accompliſh and fulfil in a moſt eminent and remarkable manner; all things that the prophets had foretold concerning the MESSIAS, were punctually made good in the perſon, and actions, and ſufferings of our SAVIOUR.

Secondly, as to the laws and precepts of the jewiſh religion, the doctrine and the laws of chriſtianity did not claſh with them; nor properly abro-

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gate them, and make them void, eſpecially as to the moral precepts, which were the very life and ſpirit, the ultimate ſcope and deſign of that religion; nay, ſo far was it from doing ſo, that the main and proper intention of chriſtianity, was to clear, and eſtabliſh that, which was the main deſign of the law and prophets, to perfect the law in this part, and to raiſe and advance morality to its higheſt pitch, to ſupply all the defects and imperfections of the jewiſh religion, and to make men much better than that weak and imperfect inſtitution was able to do. This was the great deſign of chriſtianity, and it is very probable that our SAVIOUR had a principal, if not a ſole reſpect to the precepts of the moral law, when he here ſays, that "he came not to deſtroy the law and the prophets, "but to perfect and fulfil them;" as I ſhall have occaſion by and by to ſhew more at large.

But that we may give a full anſwer to the objection of the Jews againſt this ſaying of our SAVIOUR's, I ſhall ſhew that he did not come to thwart and contradict, and properly to abrogate and make void the jewiſh law, in any part of it, neither the civil and judicial, nor the ritual and ceremonial, much leſs the moral and natural precepts of it. This is more than I think to be abſolutely neceſſary, to reconcile this ſaying of our SAVIOUR with the reſt of his doctrine and actions, for tho' he had properly abrogated the ceremonial law, and in no ſenſe fulfill'd it; yet, notwithſtanding this, it may be true, that "he came not to deſtroy the law and the pro-"phets;" that is, to deſtroy the obligation of moral duties, which he ſpeaks of in this chapter, and elſe-

elſewhere declares to be the ultimate ſcope, the ſum and ſubſtance of the law and the prophets; for if the ceremonial law was not deſigned by GOD to be perpetual, but to give way to a more perfect diſpenſation; then our SAVIOUR did no way thwart and contradict the law and the prophets; by abrogating the ceremonial law, at that time, when GOD deſigned that a period ſhould be put to it. But yet for the fuller ſatisfaction to this objection, I ſhall ſhew that our SAVIOUR did not properly abrogate any part of the jewiſh law, no not the ritual and ceremonial part of it; but did fulfil it. SERM. CIV.

Firſt, not their civil and judicial laws. Theſe in the original intention of them, were not laws deſigned for mankind, but ſuited and fitted to the diſpoſition and temper, the condition and circumſtances of a particular people and nation; to theſe our SAVIOUR taught obedience, and paid it himſelf, and never did any thing contrary to them, nor in the leaſt weaken the obligation of them; but they continued in full force, 'till that nation and commonwealth was diſſolved. So that theſe laws were no way impeached or abrogated by the chriſtian religion; but they fell for want of a ſubject to exerciſe their power upon, and becauſe the people that were to be governed by them were deſtroyed or diſſipated; and tho' they neither are, nor ever were obligatory to other nations, as given by Moſes, and as they were the peculiar laws of a particular nation; yet the natural reaſon and equity of them, ſo far as it concerned mankind, is duly conſidered and regarded by us, and many of theſe laws are adopted into the laws of moſt chriſtian nations. It is plain then, that this part of

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the jewiſh law received no prejudice by chriſtianity, but continued in full force, ſo long as that nation and commonwealth laſted, which was to be governed by it.

Secondly, as to the ritual and ceremonial part of the jewiſh law, which conſiſted in circumciſion, and purifications, and ſacrifices, in diſtinction of meats, and times, and innumerable other rites and obſervances; this was not properly abrogated and made void by the coming of CHRIST, but fulfill'd and made good by him. The rites and ceremonies of the law, were the types and ſhadows of thoſe future good things which were promiſed under the goſpel, a kind of rude draught of a better and more perfect inſtitution, which was deſigned, and at laſt finiſhed and perfected by the chriſtian religion. This account the apoſtle gives of the legal rites and obſervances, Col. ii. 16, 17. "Let no man judge you in "meat or in drink, or in reſpect of a holy-day, or "of the new-moon, or of the ſabbath-days, which "are a ſhadow of things to come, but the body is "of CHRIST;" that is, he is the ſubſtance and reality of all thoſe things, which were ſhadowed and figured by thoſe legal obſervances. And ſo the apoſtle to the Hebrews calls the prieſts and ſacrifices of the law, the "examples and ſhadows of heavenly "things," chap. viii. 5. and ſo chap. x. 1. "the "law having a ſhadow of good things to come, "and not the very image of the things," that is, being but an obſcure type, and not a perfect repreſentation of the bleſſings and benefits of the goſpel, which we now have in truth and reality. Now reaſon will tell us, that the laws concerning theſe types and

and ſhadows, were only to continue till the ſubſtance of the things ſignified by them ſhould come, and that they would be of no longer uſe, when that more perfect inſtitution, which was figured by them, ſhould take place, and then they would expire, and become void of themſelves, becauſe the reaſon and uſe of them ceaſing, they muſt neceſſarily fall.

But they did not expire immediately upon the coming of CHRIST, and therefore he himſelf ſubmitted to theſe laws, ſo long as they continued in force; he was circumciſed and preſented in the temple, and performed all other rites required by the law, that firſt covenant to which theſe laws and ordinances belonged, continuing in force 'till the ratification of the ſecond covenant by the death of CHRIST, and then theſe laws expired, or rather were fulfill'd, and had their accompliſhment in the ſacrifice of CHRIST, which made all the ſacrifices and other rites of the jewiſh religion needleſs, and of no uſe for the future; CHRIST having by this "one "ſacrifice of himſelf, perfected for ever them that are "ſanctified," as the ſame apoſtle ſpeaks, Heb. x. 14. So that CHRIST did not properly abrogate and repeal thoſe rites and ceremonial laws; but they having continued as long as they were deſigned to do, and there was any uſe of them, they abated and ceaſed of themſelves.

And that the death of CHRIST was the time of their expiration, becauſe then the new covenant took place, St. Paul expreſly tells us, Eph. ii. 15. "having aboliſhed or voided in his fleſh the law of "commandments, contained in ordinances," and this, verſe 16th, he is ſaid to have done by his croſs;

and

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and more plainly, Col. ii. 14. "blotting out the "hand-writing of ordinances, which was againſt us, "and took it out of the way, nailing it to his croſs."

So that ye ſee that even the ceremonial law was not ſo properly abrogated by the ſacrifice and death of CHRIST, but rather had its accompliſhment, and attained its end in the ſacrifice of CHRIST, which by the eternal efficacy of it to the expiation of ſin, and the purifying of our conſciences, hath made all the ſacrifices and waſhings, and other rites of the ceremonial law, for ever needleſs and ſuperfluous.

Thirdly, but eſpecially as to the moral law, and thoſe precepts which are of natural and perpetual obligation, our SAVIOUR did not come either to diſſolve, or to leſſen and ſlacken the obligation of them.

And of this I told you our SAVIOUR doth principally, if not ſolely ſpeak here in the text, as will appear to any one that ſhall attentively conſider the ſcope of his diſcourſe. In the beginning of his ſermon, he promiſeth bleſſing to thoſe, and thoſe only who were endowed with thoſe virtues which are required by the precepts of the moral law, or comprehended in them; and then he tells them, that chriſtians muſt be very eminent and conſpicuous for the practice of them, ver. 16th, "Let your light "ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good "works, and glorify our FATHER which is in hea-"ven;" and then he cautions them not to entertain any ſuch imagination, as if he intended to diſſolve the obligation of the law, and to free Men from the practice of moral duties, which probably ſome might have ſuggeſted againſt him; "think "not

" not that I am come to deſtroy the law and the " prophets;" as if he had ſaid, you cannot entertain any ſuch conceit, if you conſider that the precepts which I inculcate upon you, and thoſe virtues, the practice whereof I recommend to you, are the ſame which are contained in the law and the prophets. So that I am ſo far from croſſing the main deſign of the law and the prophets, and taking away the obligation of moral duties enjoined by the jewiſh religion, that I come purpoſely to carry on the ſame deſign to further perfection, to give a more perfect and clear law, and to give a greater enforcement and encouragement to the practice of moral duties; theſe were always the ſum and ſubſtance of religion, the ultimate deſign of the law and the prophets, and therefore I am ſo far from diſcharging men from the obligation of the moral precepts of the law, that I come to bind them more ſtrongly upon you. And " verily I ſay unto " you," that is, I ſolemnly declare, " that whoſo- " ever ſhall break one of theſe leaſt commandments, " and ſhall teach men ſo, he ſhall be called the leaſt in the Kingdom of heaven; that is, he ſhall in no wiſe enter therein. You think the ſcribes and phariſees very pious and excellent men, and to have attained to a high pitch of righteouſneſs; " but I ſay unto " you, that except your righteouſneſs ſhall exceed " the righteouſneſs of the ſcribes and phariſees, ye " ſhall in no wiſe enter into the kingdom of heaven." And then he inſtanceth in ſeveral precepts of the moral law, which in the letter of them, eſpecially as they were interpreted by the teachers of the law among the Jews, were very much ſhort of that righteouſneſs and perfection which he now requires of his

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disciples and followers. So that his whole discourse is about precepts and obligations of the moral law, and not a word concerning the ritual and ceremonial law; which makes me very prone to think, that our SAVIOUR's meaning in the text is this, that his religion was so far from thwarting and opposing that which was the main design of the law and the prophets, that is, of the jewish religion, that the principal intention of christianity was to advance the practice of goodness and virtue, by strengthning the obligation of moral duties, and giving us a more perfect law and rule of life, and offering better arguments, and greater encouragements to the obedience of this law. Therefore for the fuller explication and illustration of this matter, I shall endeavour to clear these three points.

First, that the main and ultimate design of the law and the prophets, was to engage men to the practice of moral duties, that is, of real and substantial goodness.

Secondly, that the law of Moses, or the dispensation of the jewish religion, was comparatively very weak and insufficient to this purpose.

Thirdly, that the christian religion hath supplied all the defects, and weaknesses and imperfections of that dispensation; these three particulars will fully clear our SAVIOUR's meaning in this text.

First, that the main and ultimate design of the law and the prophets, was to engage men to the practice of moral duties; that is, of real and substantial goodness, consisting in those virtues which our SAVIOUR mentions at the beginning of this sermon; humility, and meekness, and mercy, and righteousness,

and

and purity, and peaceableneſs. This our SAVIOUR more than once tells us was the ſum and ſubſtance, the main ſcope and deſign of the whole doctrine of the law and the prophets, Matth. vii. 12. "Therefore all things whatſoever ye would "that men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo "unto them, for this is the law and the prophets." And Matth. xxii. 40. That the love of GOD and our neighbour, thoſe two great commands, to which all moral duties are reduced, are the two great hinges of the jewiſh religion; "on theſe two hang all the law "and the prophets." St. Paul calls love, "the ful-"filling of the whole law," Rom. xiii. 10. St. James, "the perfect and the royal law," as that which hath a ſovereign influence upon all parts of religion. And therefore the apoſtle Rom. iii. 21. tells us, that this more perfect righteouſneſs which was brought in by the goſpel, or the chriſtian religion, is "witneſſed by the law and the prophets." And indeed the prophets every where do ſlight and undervalue the ritual and ceremonial part of religion, in compariſon of the practice of moral duties, Iſa. i. 11. "To what purpoſe is the multitude of your ſacrifices "unto me? bring no more vain oblations; your "new-moons and your appointed feaſts my ſoul "hateth." But what then are the things that are acceptable to GOD? he tells us at the 16th ver. "waſh "ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your "doings from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, "learn to do well; ſeek judgment, relieve the op-"preſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the wi-"dow." And by the prophet Jeremiah GOD tells that people, that the buſineſs of ſacrifices was not

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the thing primarily designed by GOD, but obedience to the moral law; the ritual law came in upon occasion, for the prevention of idolatry, and by way of condescension to the temper of that people; and thus Maimonides and the learned Jews understand these words, Jer. vii. 22, 23. "I spake not unto your fa- "thers, nor commanded them in the day I brought "them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt- "offerings and sacrifices; but this thing commanded "I them, saying, obey my voice, and walk in all "the ways that I have commanded, and I will be "your GOD and ye shall be my people." So likewise in the prophet Hosea, GOD plainly prefers the moral before the ritual part of religion, as that which was principally designed and intended by him, Hos. vi. 6. "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the "knowledge of GOD more than burnt-offerings;" but most plainly and expressly, Mic. vi. 6. "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD? shall "I come before him with burnt-offerings? will the "LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, and ten "thousands of rivers of oil? he hath shewed thee, "O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD "require of thee, but to do justly, and to love "mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD?" these it seems were the great things which GOD stood upon and required of men even under that imperfect dispensation; and these are the very things which the christian religion doth so strictly enjoin and command; so that this righteousness which the gospel requires, "was witnessed to by the law and the pro- "phets." I proceed to the

Second point, that the law of Moses, or the dispensation of the jewish religion, was comparatively very

very weak, and inſufficient to make men truly good, and for the promoting of real and inward righteouſneſs; it gave laws indeed to this purpoſe, but thoſe not ſo clear and perfect, or at leaſt not ſo clearly underſtood, as they are now under the goſpel; and it made no expreſs promiſes of inward grace, and aſſiſtance, to quicken and ſtrengthen us in the doing of our duty; it made no explicit promiſes of any bleſſing and reward to the doing of our duty beyond this life; ſo that the beſt and moſt powerful arguments and encouragements to obedience, were either wholly wanting, or very obſcurely revealed under this diſpenſation. SERM. CIV.

And this inſufficiency of the jewiſh diſpenſation, both to our juſtification and ſanctification, to the reconciling of us to GOD, and the making of us really good, the apoſtle frequently inculcates in the new teſtament; St. Paul, Acts xiii. 38, 39. "Be it "known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that "through this man is preached unto you the for-"giveneſs of ſins, and by him all that believe are "juſtified from all thoſe things, from which ye "could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes;" and Rom. viii. 3. "What the law could not do, "in that it was weak through the fleſh;" that is, by reaſon of the carnality of that diſpenſation, conſiſting in the purification of the body. Gal. iii. 21. he calls it a law unfit to give life; "if there had "been a law which could have given life, verily "righteouſneſs had been by the law." And the apoſtle to the Hebrews, chap. viii. 6, 7, 8, &c, finds fault with the diſpenſation of the law, for the lowneſs and meanneſs of its promiſes, being only of

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temporal good things; and for want of conferring an inward and a powerful principle to enable men to obedience; "but now hath he obtained (ſpeaking "of CHRIST) a more excellent miniſtry, by how "much alſo he is the mediator of a better covenant, "which was eſtabliſhed upon better promiſes; for "if that firſt covenant had been faultleſs, then ſhould "no place have been ſought for a ſecond;" and this ſecond and better covenant, he tells us, was foretold by the prophets of the old teſtament; "for "finding fault with them, he ſaith, behold the days "come, ſaith the LORD, when I will make a new "covenant with the houſe of Iſrael, and the houſe "of Judah; not according to the covenant which "I made with their fathers. For this is the cove-"nant which I will make with the houſe of Iſrael "after thoſe days, ſaith the LORD, I will put my "laws into their minds, and write them in their "hearts." And chap. x. 1, 4. he ſhews the ineffi-cacy of their ſacrifices for the real expiation of ſin, "the law having but a ſhadow of good things "to come, and not the lively repreſentation of the "things themſelves, can never with thoſe ſacrifices "which they offer'd year by year continually, make "the comers thereunto perfect; for it is not poſſi-"ble that the blood of bulls and goats ſhould "take away ſins."

I ſhould now have proceeded to the third particular; namely, that the chriſtian religion hath ſupplied all the defects and weakneſs and imperfection of the jewiſh diſpenſation; but that I ſhall not now enter upon, but make one plain inference from the ſubſtance of what I have already diſcourſed upon this argument. If

If our SAVIOUR came not to diſſolve and looſen the obligation of moral duties, but to confirm and eſtabliſh it, and to enforce and bind the practice of theſe duties more ſtrongly upon us, then they do widely and wilfully miſtake the deſign of chriſtianity, who teach "that it diſchargeth men from the "obligation of the moral law," which is the fundamental and avowed principle of the antinomian doctrine, but directly contrary to this declaration of our SAVIOUR in the text, "that he came not to de-"ſtroy the law and the prophets, but to perfect and "fulfil them;" (for to take away the obligation of a law, is plainly to deſtroy and make it void;) and contrary to the apoſtle's ſolemn reſolution of this matter, Rom. iii. 31. "Do we then make void the "law through faith?" that is, does the goſpel deſtroy and take away the obligation of the law? "GOD forbid, yea we eſtabliſh the law;" the chriſtian religion is ſo far from deſigning or doing any ſuch thing, that it gives new ſtrength and force to it. SERM. CIV.

But ſurely they that teach this doctrine, did never duly conſider that terrible threatning of our SAVIOUR after the text, which ſeems to be ſo directly levell'd at them; "whoſoever ſhall break one of "theſe leaſt commandments, and ſhall teach men ſo, "he ſhall be called the leaſt in the kingdom of "heaven;" for how can men more effectually teach the violation, not only of the leaſt, but of the greateſt of GOD's commandments, than by declaring "that the goſpel hath ſet men free from the obliga-"tion of the moral law?" which is in effect to ſay, that chriſtians may act contrary to all the duties of morality, that is, do the moſt impious things in

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in the world, without any offence against God, and notwithstanding this, continue to be his children, and highly in the favour of God.

And all the security they have against this impious consequence, is that weak and slender pretence, "that "gratitude and love to God will preserve them "from making this ill use of the grace of the gos-"pel, and oblige them to abstain from sin, and to "endeavour to please God as much as any law could "do." But then they do not consider the nonsense of this; for there can be no such thing as sin, if the obligation of the law be taken away; for "where "there is no law, there can be no transgression," as the apostle, and common reason likewise tells us; so that the law being removed and taken away, all actions become indifferent, and one thing is not more a sin or offence against God than another. And what then is it they mean that gratitude will oblige men to, or preserve them from? when there can be no such thing as sin or duty, as pleasing or offending God, if there be no law to oblige us to the one, or restrain us from the other.

And what is, if this be not, "to turn the grace "of God into wantonness," and to make christian liberty a cloke for all sorts of sins? a man cannot do a greater despite to the christian religion, nor take a more effectual course to bring it into contempt, and to make it to be hiss'd out of the world, than to represent it as a lewd and licentious doctrine, which gives men a perfect discharge from all the duties of morality, and obligeth them only to believe confidently, "that Christ hath purchased for them a liberty to "do what they will, and that upon those terms,

"and

" and no other, they are ſecured of the favour of " GOD in this world, and eternal ſalvation in the " other." This is the ſum and plain reſult of the antinomian doctrine, the moſt pernicious hereſy, and moſt directly deſtructive of the great end and deſign of chriſtianity, that ever yet was broached in the world. " But ye have not ſo learned CHRIST, " if ſo be ye have heard him, and have been taught " by him, as the truth is in JESUS, that ye put off " concerning your former converſation, the old " man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful " luſts, and that ye be renewed in the ſpirit of your " mind, and put on the new man, which after " GOD is created in righteouſneſs, and true holi- " neſs."

SERMON CV.

Chriſtianity doth not deſtroy, but perfect the law of Moſes.

MATTHEW v. 17.

Think not that I am come to deſtroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil.

SERM. CV. The ſecond ſermon on this text.

I Have conſider'd this ſaying of our SAVIOUR's with reſpect to the moral law, and thoſe precepts which are of natural and perpetual force, and that our SAVIOUR did not come either to diſſolve or looſen the obligation of them; for the illuſtration of which, I propounded to clear theſe three points. Firſt,

Firſt, that the main and ultimate deſign of the law and the prophets, was to engage men to the practice of moral duties, that is, of real and ſubſtantial goodneſs.

Secondly, that the law of Moſes, or the diſpenſation of the jewiſh religion, was comparatively very weak, and inſufficient to make men truly good, and ineffectual to promote inward and real righteouſneſs. Theſe two points I have ſpoken to. I ſhall now proceed to the

Third, namely, that the chriſtian religion doth ſupply all the defects and weakneſſes and imperfections of the jewiſh diſpenſation.

The jewiſh religion had very conſiderable advantages above the meer light of nature, which was all that the heathen world had to conduct them towards eternal happineſs; the Jews had the knowledge of the one true GOD, and very ſignal and particular teſtimonies of the divine providence, which did naturally tend to beget in them good hopes of a future life, and the rewards of another world; they had the natural law revealed, and the main precepts of it written with GOD's own hand, and by Moſes delivered to them; by which means they had a more certain and diſtinct knowledge of their duty; they had prophets frequently ſent to them, to admoniſh them of their duty, and to exhort them to repentance, and to warn them of approaching judgments. They had good encouragement given to hope for the pardon of ſin, by GOD's appointment of ſeveral ways of expiation; which, how unlikely ſoever they were to be available to the effectual expiation of ſin, yet they did ſignify that the divine nature was placable,

cable, and did ſeem to figure ſome more effectual way, deſigned by GOD for that purpoſe, that ſhould be exhibited in due time. And finally they had moſt expreſs promiſes and threatnings of temporal bleſſings and judgments, to encourage them in their obedience, and to deter them from the tranſgreſſion of GOD's laws. Theſe advantages the Jews plainly had above the reſt of the world, GOD did not deal ſo with other nations, neither had the heathen ſuch a knowledge of GOD's laws. SERM. CV.

But notwithſtanding this, the jewiſh religion was very ſhort and defective, very weak and ineffectual to the great end of righteouſneſs and true holineſs, and to raiſe men to that perfection of goodneſs, of which humane nature through the grace of GOD is capable; and therefore there wanted a more perfect inſtitution, to ſupply the defects and weakneſs and imperfection even of that divine revelation which GOD had made to the Jews, and really to effect and accompliſh that which the jewiſh religion attempted and aimed at, and was but, as I may ſay, rudely begun under that imperfect inſtitution. And this the goſpel, or the chriſtian religion revealed by our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, hath fully effected, as will evidently appear by a particular ſurvey and conſideration of the main defects of the jewiſh religion, which I ſhall ſhew to be all perfectly made up by the revelation of the goſpel, and the doctrine of chriſtianity, in theſe following particulars.

Firſt, it was a great defect of the jewiſh religion, that a conſiderable part of it was meerly external, concerning the purification of the body and the fleſh, and only figurative of that inward purity and real

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righteouſneſs, which renders men truly good, and like to GOD; for which reaſon the jewiſh inſtitution is by the apoſtle to the Hebrews called "the law "of a carnal commandment," Heb. vii. 16, and chap. ix. 10; is ſaid "to conſiſt only (that is chiefly) "in meats and drinks, and divers waſhings, and "carnal ordinances impoſed on them until the time "of reformation;" that is, 'till the MESSIAS ſhould come, and give ſuch laws as ſhould really tend to reform the hearts and lives of men; and therefore theſe laws and ordinances are call'd "poor "pitiful elements," and "the rudiments of the "world," fitted rather for children in underſtanding and goodneſs, than to bring men to any maturity and perfection in goodneſs. All their rites of purification did "only ſanctify to the purifying of "the fleſh;" but "did not purge the conſcience "from dead works," as the apoſtle to the Hebrews ſpeaks, chap. ix. 13, 14. "they could not make "thoſe that performed and obſerved them perfect, "as pertaining to the conſcience," ver. 9. that is, theſe laws had no effect upon the minds of men, to make them really better, to cure them of their moral defects and impurities, their ſins and vices.

But the chriſtian inſtitution doth perfectly ſupply this defect, by taking us off from thoſe carnal and external obſervances, and principally requiring that we "worſhip GOD in ſpirit and in truth;" by giving us ſuch laws as wholly tend to advance real and ſubſtantial goodneſs, purity and holineſs of heart and life, ſuch as mainly tend to reform the minds and manners of men, and to make us like to that holy and perfect being whom we worſhip:

worſhip: and beſides an external humble and reverent demeanour of our ſelves in the worſhip of GOD, (to which natural religion doth likewiſe direct:) chriſtianity hath only inſtituted two ſolemn external rites, viz. "baptiſm, and the LORD's ſupper;" whereby we ſolemnly oblige our ſelves to the practice of all virtue and goodneſs, I ſay only theſe two, that by the multitude of external obſervances, chriſtians might not be taken off from the minding of the real and ſubſtantial duties of religion. SERM. CV.

And therefore the church of Rome have extremely abated and weakned the force of chriſtianity upon the hearts and lives of men, by amuſing them with external rites, which they have multiplied to that exceſſive degree, as to make the yoke of CHRIST really heavier than that of Moſes, and the chriſtian religion, a more external and carnal commandment than that of the law, and by this means have diverted and taken off the minds of men from the main deſign of chriſtianity, inſomuch that they are ſo employed and taken up with matters of external ceremony, that they have no leiſure to think of being good men, and to mind the great and ſubſtantial duties and virtues of the chriſtian life; ſo that they have ſpoil'd the chriſtian religion of one of its chief excellencies and perfections, I mean the ſimplicity of its worſhip, which they have now encumbred with ſo many fooliſh and frivolous rites and obſervances, as do not only render it more burdenſom, but leſs apt to make men inwardly and ſubſtantialiy good, that even judaiſm it ſelf. This is ſo true and ſo viſible, than the wiſer and better ſort of them have complain'd of it for ſeveral ages, and

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still do, as much as they dare for fear of the inquisition, or some other censure.

Secondly, another defect of the law of Moses was, that it did not give encouragement enough to repentance, by declaring and assuring to us any certain way and method for the expiation and forgiveness of sin. This the rites of all religions aimed at, and pretended to; but were very ineffectual to that end. The heathen sacrifices, and all the cruel and barbarous rites belonging to them, did all pretend to be so many ways of appeasing the offended deity, and of making atonement and expiation for sin; and the sacrifices of the Jews were instituted by GOD himself, to make an external and legal expiation, and to be types and shadows of a better and more perfect sacrifice, which should really expiate sin; but even this was very darkly and imperfectly discovered to them; besides, that the expiations of the law did only extend to the least sorts of sins, those of ignorance and inadvertency, but not at all to presumptuous sins, and such as were committed with a high hand, nor to wilful and deliberate sins, except in some very few and rare cases particularly mentioned in the law; so that tho' a great part of the religious rites both of the pagan and jewish religion, aimed at the expiation of sin, yet were they really ineffectual to that end; and upon the whole matter, mankind, tho' they conceived good hope of GOD's mercy and forgiveness in case of repentance, "(who "can tell if GOD will turn and repent, and turn "away from his anger?") yet they were unacquainted with any certain and effectual means to that purpose.

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It remains then, that this great bleſſing of the forgiveneſs of ſins, was never ſufficiently declared and aſſured to mankind, but through JESUS CHRIST in the goſpel. So St. Paul expreſly aſſerts, Acts xiii. 38, 39. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and "brethren, that through this man is preached unto "you the forgiveneſs of ſins, and by him all that "believe are juſtified from all things, from which ye "could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes." The goſpel hath provided an expiation for all ſins in general, and that by a ſacrifice of ineſtimable value, "the blood of the ſon of GOD." And this is a mighty encouragement to repentance, and one moſt effectual means to reclaim men from their ſins, to be aſſured that they are indemnified for what is paſt. And this the apoſtle means, when he ſays, Gal. iii. 13. "that CHRIST hath redeemed us from the curſe "of the law, being made a curſe for us;" that is, whereas the law left ſinners, as to thoſe ſins which ſtood moſt in need of pardon, under a curſe, having provided no expiation for them. CHRIST hath redeemed them from that curſe, by making a general expiation for ſin; and in this ſenſe it is that the author to the Hebrews ſays, chap. ix. 15. that CHRIST died "for the redemption of the tranſgreſſions that "were under the firſt covenant"; that is, for thoſe ſins for which the covenant of the law had provided no way of forgiveneſs; and therefore St. John ſays emphatically, 1 John i. 7. "that the blood of JESUS "CHRIST cleanſeth us from all ſin."

Thirdly, the law did not afford ſufficiently plain and certain rules and directions for a good life. As the corruption and degeneracy of mankind grew

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worse, so the light of nature waxed dimmer and dimmer, and the rule of good and evil was more doubtful and uncertain, and that in very considerable instances of our duty. The law of Moses was peculiar to the Jews; and even to them, who only had the benefit and and advantage of it, it did not give clear and perfect light and direction as to moral duties, and those things which are of an eternal and immutable reason and goodness. And therefore our SAVIOUR in this sermon explains it to a greater perfection than it was understood to have among the Jews, or the letter of it seemed to intend, and hath not only forbidden several things permitted by the law, as divorce, and retaliation of injuries; but hath heightned our duty in several instances of it, requiring us "to "love our enemies," and "to forgive the greatest "injuries and provocations, tho' never so often re-"peated," and not only "not to revenge them, but "to requite them with good turns," which were not understood by mankind to be laws before, but yet when duly consider'd, are very agreeable to right reason, and the sense of the wisest and best men. So that the christian religion hath not only fixt and determined our duty, and brought it to a greater certainty, but hath raised it to a greater perfection, and rendered it every way fit to bring the minds of men to a more divine temper, and a more reasonable and perfect way of serving GOD, than ever the world was instructed in before.

Fourthly, the promises and threatnings of the law were only of temporal good and evil things, which are, in comparison of the endless rewards and punishments of another world, but very languid and faint motives

motives to obedience. Not but that the Jews under the law had ſuch apprehenſions of their own immortality, and of a future ſtate of happineſs and miſery after this life, as natural light ſuggeſted to them; which was in moſt but a wavering and uncertain perſuaſion, and conſequently of ſmall efficacy to engage men to their duty; but the law of Moſes added little or nothing to the clearneſs of thoſe natural notions concerning a future ſtate, and the ſtrengthning of this perſuaſion in the minds of men; it did rather ſuppoſe it, than give any new force and life to it. And for this reaſon more particularly the apoſtle tells us that the law was but weak to make men good; becauſe it did not work ſtrongly enough upon the hopes and fears of men by the weight of its promiſes, and the terror of its threatnings; and that for this weakneſs and imperfection of it, it was removed, and a more powerful and awakning diſpenſation brought in the place of it; Heb. vii. 18, 19. "For there is "verily a diſannulling of the commandment that "was before (that is of the jewiſh law) for the weak-"neſs and unprofitableneſs thereof; for the law "made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a "better hope did;" that is, the covenant of the goſpel, which promiſeth eternal life. And chap. viii. 6. for this reaſon more eſpecially the apoſtle ſays, that CHRIST had "obtained a more excellent mi-"niſtry, being the mediator of a better covenant, "which was eſtabliſhed upon better promiſes." And Rom. i. 16, 18. St. Paul tell us, that for this reaſon "the goſpel is the power of GOD unto ſalvation," becauſe "therein the wrath of GOD is revealed from "heaven, againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſ-

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"nefs of men." the clear revelation of a future judg-ment, was that which made the gospel so proper and so powerful an instrument for the salvation of men. The great impiety of mankind, and their impenitency in it, was not so much to be wondred at before, while the world was in a great measure ignorant of the infinite danger of a wicked life; and therefore GOD is said in some sort to overlook it; "but now he commands all men every where to re-"pent, because he hath appointed a day in which he "will judge the world in righteousness by that man, "whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given "assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him "from the dead," Acts xvii. 30, 31. The clear discovery and perfect assurance of a future judgment, calls loudly upon all men to leave their sins, and turn to GOD.

Fifthly, the covenant of the law had no spiritual promises contained in it, of the grace and assistance of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, for the mortifying of sin, and enabling men to their duty, and supporting them under sufferings: but the gospel is full of clear and express promises to this purpose. Our SAVIOUR hath assured us, "that GOD will give his HOLY "SPIRIT to them that ask him," Luke xi. 13. and this the apostle tells us is actually conferr'd upon all true christians, those who do sincerely embrace and believe the gospel, Rom. viii. 9. "If any man have "not the SPIRIT of CHRIST, he is none of his." Hence the gospel is called by the same apostle, "the "law of the SPIRIT of life in CHRIST JESUS," ver. 2d of that chap. "The law of the SPIRIT of life in "CHRIST JESUS, hath made me free from the law of "sin and death;" and in the next words he tells us, that herein

herein manifeſtly appeared the weakneſs of the law, that it left men deſtitute of this mighty help and advantage (at leaſt as to any ſpecial promiſe of it) "What the law could not do, in that it was weak "through the fleſh, GOD ſent his own SON in the "likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, and by making him a "ſacrifice for ſin, condemned ſin in the fleſh, that "the righteouſneſs of the law might be fulfilled in "us, who walk not after the fleſh but after the "ſpirit;" that is, that that righteouſneſs which the law aimed at and ſignified, but was too weak to effect, might be really accompliſh'd in us, "who "walk not after the fleſh, but after the ſpirit;" that is, who are acted and aſſiſted by a higher and better principle than men either have in nature, or the carnal diſpenſation of the law did endow men withal. And becauſe of this great defect the law is ſaid to be a ſtate of bondage and ſervitude; and on the contrary, the goſpel, by reaſon of this mighty advantage, is called a ſtate of adoption and liberty, ver. 15. "for ye have not received the ſpirit of "bondage, but the ſpirit of adoption, whereby "we cry Abba FATHER;" and 2 Cor. iii. 17. "where the SPIRIT of the LORD is, there is liberty." And to this very thing St. Paul appeals, as that whereby men might judge whether the law of the goſpel were the more excellent and powerful diſpenſation, Gal. iii. 2. "This only would I learn of you, "received ye the SPIRIT by the works of the law, "or by the hearing of faith?" As if he had ſaid, let this one thing determine that whole matter; were ye made partakers of this great privilege and bleſſing of the SPIRIT, while ye were of the jewiſh religion,

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or since ye became christians? And ver. 14. he calls it "the blessing of Abraham;" that is, the blessing promised to all nations by Abraham's seed, namely, the Messias; "that the blessing of Abraham might "come on the gentiles through JESUS CHRIST, "that we might receive the promise of the SPIRIT "through faith."

And then for the supporting us under afflictions, the gospel promiseth an extraordinary assistance of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT to us, 1 Pet. iv. 14. "if ye "be reproached for the name of CHRIST, happy "are ye, for the SPIRIT of glory and of GOD rest-"eth upon you."

But were there no good men under the dispensation of the law? Yes certainly there were, and they were so by the grace and assistance of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT: but then this was an effect of the divine goodness; but not of any special promise, contained in that covenant, of divine grace and assistance to be conferred on all those that were admitted into it. But thus it is in the new covenant of the gospel; and therefore the law is called "a dead letter, "the oldness of the letter, and the ministration of "the letter," in opposition to the gospel, which is called the "ministration of the SPIRIT." And this the apostle lays special weight upon, as a main difference between these two covenants, that the first gave an external law, but the new covenant offers inward grace and assistance to enable men to obedience, and hath an inward and powerful efficacy upon the minds of men, accompanying the ministration of it, Heb. viii. 7, 8, 9, 10. "For if that first "covenant had been faultless, then should no place

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" have been ſought for the ſecond. For finding SERM.
" fault with them, he ſaith, behold the days come, CV.
" ſaith the LORD, when I will make a new cove-
" nant with the houſe of Iſrael, and with the houſe
" of Judah, not according to the covenant which
" I made with their fathers, &c. For this is the co-
" venant which I will make with the houſe of Iſrael
" after thoſe days, ſaith the LORD; I will put my
" laws into their minds, and write them in their
" hearts."

And of this inward grace and aſſiſtance we are further ſecured, by the powerful and prevalent and perpetual interceſſion of our high-prieſt for ſinners, at the right hand of GOD; not like the interceſſion of the prieſts under the law, who being ſinners themſelves, were leſs fit to intercede for others; but " we " have an high-prieſt that is holy, harmleſs, unde-" filed, and ſeparate from ſinners, who by the eter-" nal SPIRIT offer'd himſelf without ſpot to GOD," to purchaſe for us thoſe bleſſings which he intercedes for. The prieſts under the law were interceſſors upon earth; but " CHRIST is entred into heaven itſelf, " now to appear in the preſence of GOD for us," Heb. ix. 24. The prieſts under the law were removed from this office by death; but " CHRIST, " becauſe he continues for ever, hath an unchange-" able prieſthood," and is an everlaſting advocate and interceſſor for us, in the virtue of his moſt meritorious ſacrifice continually preſented to his FATHER, where he is " always at the right hand of GOD," to preſent our prayers to him, and to obtain pardon of our ſins, and " grace to help in time of need," and by his interceſſion in heaven to procure all thoſe

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bleſſings to be actually conferred upon us, which he purchaſed for us by his blood upon earth; "where-"fore he is able to ſave to the utmoſt all thoſe that "come to GOD by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to "make interceſſion for them," as the ſame apoſtle ſpeaks, Heb. vii. 25.

And thus I have, as briefly as well I could, ſhewed how the chriſtian religion doth ſupply all the weakneſſes and imperfections of the jewiſh religion, and conſequently does in no ways contradict or interfere with the great deſign of the law and the prophets, but hath perfected and made up whatever was weak or wanting in that inſtitution to make men truly good, or, as the expreſſion is in the prophet Daniel, "to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs;" that is, to clear and confirm thoſe laws of holineſs and righteouſneſs, which are of indiſpenſible and eternal obligation.

And if this be the great deſign of our SAVIOUR'S coming, and the chriſtian doctrine be every way fitted to advance righteouſneſs and true holineſs, and to make us as excellently good as this imperfect ſtate of mortality will admit, ſince it hath many advantages incomparably beyond any religion or inſtitution that ever was in the world, both in reſpect of the perfection of its laws, and the force of its Motives and arguments to repentance, and a holy life, and in reſpect of the encouragements which it gives, and the examples which it ſets before us, and the powerful aſſiſtance which it offers to us, to enable us "to "cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh "and ſpirit, and to perfect holineſs in the fear of "GOD;" what a ſhame is this to us, who are under

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the power of this excellent inſtitution, if the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our converſation be not in ſome meaſure anſwerable to the goſpel of CHRIST! the greater helps and advantages we have of being good, the greater things may juſtly be expected from us; for "to whomſoever much is given, "of him much ſhall be required." SERM. CV.

Chriſtianity is "the fulfilling of the righteouſneſs "of the law, by walking not after the fleſh, but af- "ter the ſpirit, by mortifying the deeds of the "fleſh, and by bringing forth the fruits of the "SPIRIT," which are "love, joy, peace, long- "ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, fidelity, meek- "neſs, and temperance." The righteouſneſs of faith doth not conſiſt in a barren and ineffectual belief of the goſpel, in a mere embracing of the promiſes of it, and relying upon CHRIST for ſalvation, in "a faith without works, which is dead;" but in "a faith which worketh by love," in becoming "new creatures," and in "keeping the command- "ments of GOD." "The righteouſneſs of faith "ſpeaketh on this wiſe. This is his commandment, "that we ſhould believe on the name of his SON "JESUS CHRIST, and love one another, as he gave "us commandment," 1 John iii. 23. and "this "commandment have we from him, that he who "loveth GOD, love his brother alſo," 1 John iv. 21. "That we approve the things that are excellent, be- "ing filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs, which "are by JESUS CHRIST to the glory and praiſe of "GOD," Philip. i. 10, 11. "Whatſoever things are "true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever "things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, what-

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" soever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of " good report, if there be any virtue, if there be " any praise, mind these things," chap. iv. 8.

And then considering what abundant provision the gospel hath made for our attainment of everlasting salvation, we are altogether without excuse if we perish. Since GOD " hath raised up so mighty a sal- " vation for us; how shall we escape?" If we " die in our sins;" it is not because GOD would not forgive them, but because we would not repent and be saved; the fault is all our own, and we owe it wholly to ourselves, if we be lost and undone for ever. If when life and death, heaven and hell, are so plainly set before us, eternal misery and perdition fall to our lot and portion, it is not because we were not warned of our danger, or because happiness and " the things of our peace were hid from our eyes," but because we have made death and destruction our obstinate and final choice.

" But, beloved, I hope better things of you, and " things which accompany salvation, tho' I thus " speak." " Only let your conversation be as be- " cometh the gospel of CHRIST;" and if we be careful to perform the conditions which the gospel requires on our part, we shall not fail to be made partakers of that " eternal life, which GOD, that " cannot lye, hath promised to us, for his mercy's " sake in JESUS CHRIST."

SERMON

SERMON CVI.

Of the nature of regeneration, and its neceſſity, in order to juſtification and ſalvation.

GALAT. vi, 15.

For in CHRIST JESUS, *neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion; but a new creature.*

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The firſt ſermon on this text.

THERE are two epiſtles of St. Paul, namely, that to the Romans, and this to the Galatians, which are principally and particularly deſign'd to confute a falſe perſuaſion, which had prevailed amongſt many chriſtians, eſpecially thoſe who were converted from judaiſm; "that it was not "enough for men to embrace and confeſs the chri-"ſtian religion, unleſs they kept the law of Moſes, "or at leaſt ſubmitted to that great precept, of cir-"cumciſion; the neglect whereof among all the "affirmative precepts of the law, was only threatned "with exciſion, or being cut off from among the "people." And of the prevalency of this error, and the great diſturbance which it made in the chriſtian church, we have a particular account, Acts xv. where a general council of the apoſtles is call'd, and a letter written in their names to all the chriſtian churches, to rectify their apprehenſions in this matter, ver. 24. of that chap. "For as much as we have "heard, that certain which went out from us, have "troubled you with words, ſubverting your ſouls, ſaying,

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ſaying, ye muſt be circumcis'd, and keep the law, " to whom we gave no ſuch commandment, &c.

And upon this occaſion likewiſe it was, that St. Paul wrote this epiſtle to the Galatians, as likewiſe that to the Romans; in the former of which, after he had at large confuted this error, (which he calls " the preaching of another goſpel, than what the " apoſtles had preached, and the chriſtians firſt re- " ceived") In the beginning of the vth chap. he exhorts them to aſſert the liberty, which CHRIST had purchas'd for them, from the obligation of the law of Moſes, ver. 1, 2. " Stand faſt therefore in the liberty " wherewith CHRIST hath made us free, and be not " entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Be- " hold, I Paul ſay unto you, that if ye be circum- " ciſed, CHRIST ſhall profit you nothing;" not that hereby he condemneth circumciſion, as a thing evil in it ſelf; for GOD never inſtituted or commanded any thing that was ſo; but he oppoſeth the opinion of the neceſſity of it to our juſtification and ſalvation, when the goſpel had ſo plainly taken away the obligation and uſe of it; and conſequently to affirm ſtill the neceſſity of it, was really to renounce chriſtianity. For if judaiſm was ſtill the way to ſalvation, chriſtianity was to no purpoſe; and if chriſtianity be now the way, then the obligation to the jewiſh religion was ceaſed. To avoid the force of this reaſoning, it was not enough for the falſe apoſtles to ſay (as it ſeems they did) that chriſtians were not obliged univerſally to the whole law of Moſes, but principally to the law of circumciſion; becauſe circumciſion being the ſign and badge of that covenant, whoever took that upon him, did thereby own his

his obligation to the whole law, ver. 3, 4. " For I SERM. CVI.
" teſtify again to every man that is circumciſed, that
" he is a debtor to do the whole law; CHRIST is be-
" come of no effect to you, whoſoever of you are
" juſtified by the law, ye are fallen from grace;"
that is, whoever of you expect and profeſs to be juſti-
fied by the law of Moſes, ye take away the neceſ-
ſity and uſe of the chriſtian religion; and " are
" fallen from grace;" that is, do in effect renounce
the goſpel; " for we, through the SPIRIT, wait for
" the hope of righteouſneſs by faith," ver 5. we by
the SPIRIT, in oppoſition to circumciſion, which
was in the fleſh, do expect to be juſtified by the be-
lief of the goſpel. " For in JESUS CHRIST, neither
" circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumci-
" ſion," ver. 6. that is, now under the diſpenſation
of the goſpel by CHRIST JESUS, it ſignifies nothing
to a man's juſtification or ſalvation, whether he be
circumciſed, or not circumciſed, whether he be a
jew or a gentile. All that the goſpel requires as ne-
ceſſary to theſe purpoſes, is, that we perform the
conditions of the goſpel, that ſo we may be capable
of being made partakers of the bleſſings of it.

Now as the great bleſſing and benefit of the goſpel
is variouſly expreſt, as by " the forgiveneſs of our
" ſins," by " our acceptance with GOD," or (which
comprehends both,) by " our juſtification," ſome-
times " by adoption," and " our being made the ſons
" and children of GOD," ſometimes " by redemp-
" tion," and (which is the conſummation of all)
" by ſalvation and eternal life;" I ſay, as the bleſ-
ſing and benefit of the goſpel, is in ſcripture expreſt
to us by theſe ſeveral terms, which do in effect all

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ſignify the ſame thing; ſo our duty, and the condition the goſpel requires on our part, is likewiſe as variouſly expreſt, ſometimes, and that very frequently, by the word faith, as being the great ſource and principle of all religious acts and performances; but then this faith muſt not be a bare aſſent and perſuaſion of the truth of the goſpel, but ſuch an effectual belief, as expreſſeth it ſelf in ſuitable acts of obedience and holineſs, ſuch as the apoſtle here calls πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη, "a faith which worketh by love", a faith that is inſpir'd and acted, or rather conſummate and made perfect by charity, (for ſo the word doth often ſignify,) and then this phraſe will be juſt of the ſame importance with that of St. James, chap. ii. 22. "by works is faith made perfect." Sometimes, and that alſo very frequently, the condition of the goſpel is expreſt by words which ſignify the change of our ſtate, as by "repentance, converſion, regeneration, "renovation, ſanctification, the new creature, and the "new man," which expreſſions are all ſo well known, that I need not refer to particular texts; ſometimes the condition of the goſpel is expreſt by the viſible and ſenſible effects of this inward change in our outward life and actions; as namely by "obedience "and keeping the commandments of GOD." So Heb. v. 9. CHRIST is ſaid to be "the author of "eternal ſalvation to them that obey him;" where obedience is plainly put for the whole condition of the goſpel, the performance whereof entitles us to eternal life and happineſs.

Now that by theſe various expreſſions, one and the ſame thing is certainly intended and meant, viz. the condition of the goſpel; that which is requir'd

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on our part, in order to our full and perfect juſtification and acceptance with GOD, is evident beyond all denial; by comparing the three different ways whereby St. Paul doth expreſs the ſame propoſition for ſenſe and ſubſtance; in which he tells us, what it is that will avail to our juſtification under the goſpel, that is, according to the terms of the chriſtian religion; that is neither here nor there, that it ſignifies nothing whether a man be circumciſed or not, but that we be ſo qualified as the goſpel requires, that the conditions upon which the bleſſings of the goſpel are promiſed be found in us. And there are three texts wherein the ſame thing is plainly intended in three very different expreſſions. Gal. v. 6. "In "JESUS CHRIST neither circumciſion availeth any "thing, nor uncircumciſion: but faith, which is "conſummate, or made perfect by charity." Gal. vi. 15. "For in CHRIST JESUS neither circumci- "ſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion; but "a new creature." 1 Cor. vii. 19. "Circumci- "ſion is nothing, and uncircumciſion is nothing: "but the keeping of the commandments of GOD." It is evident, that in theſe three texts the apoſtle deſigns to ſay the ſame thing, and conſequently that "faith which is made perfect by charity, and the "new creature, and keeping of the commandments "of GOD," are the ſame in ſenſe and ſubſtance, viz. the condition of our juſtification and acceptance with GOD under the covenant of the goſpel, or in the chriſtian religion.

I ſhall at preſent, by GOD's aſſiſtance, handle the ſecond of theſe texts. "In CHRIST JESUS neither "circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumci-

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" ſion: but a new creature." And here the condition of the goſpel is expreſt to us, by the change of our ſtate, which in ſcripture is call'd our " rege- " neration, or becoming new creatures, and new " men." Circumciſion was but an outward ſign and mark upon the body and the fleſh, though it did indeed prefigure and typify the inward circumciſion of the heart, the giving of men new hearts, and new ſpirits, under the more perfect diſpenſation of the goſpel: but now in JESUS CHRIST, that is, in the chriſtian religion, the preſence or the want of this outward mark will avail nothing to our juſtification; but that which was ſignified by it, the renovation of our hearts and ſpirits, our becoming new creatures, is now the condition of our juſtification and acceptance with GOD.

The falſe apoſtles indeed did lay great ſtreſs upon the buſineſs of circumciſion, not ſo much out of zeal to the law of Moſes, as to avoid perſecution, ver. 12. " They conſtrain you to be circumciſed, only leſt " they ſhould ſuffer perſecution for the croſs of " CHRIST." For at that time, though the chriſtians were perſecuted, yet the Jews by the Roman edicts had the free exerciſe of their religion, and therefore they gloried in this external mark of circumciſion, becauſe it exempted them from ſuffering; but St. Paul gloried in his ſufferings for CHRIST, and the marks of that upon his body, ver. 14. " GOD forbid that I ſhould glory ſave in the croſs " of our LORD JESUS CHRIST;" and ver. 17. " I " bear in my body the marks of the LORD JESUS." He tells them, what neceſſities ſoever they might pretend of circumciſion, either for their juſtification,

or

or ſalvation, the true ground of all was to ſave themſelves from temporal ſufferings; and that in the chriſtian religion it ſignifieth nothing to recommend them to the favour of GOD, whether they were circumciſed or not; nothing would be available to this purpoſe, but the renovation and change of their hearts and lives. "For in CHRIST JESUS neither "circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumci- "ſion; but a new creature, καινὴ κτίσις, a new "creation," to intimate the greatneſs of the change, which chriſtianity, throughly entertained, made in men.

Having thus cleared the occaſion and meaning of theſe words, I come now to conſider the particulars contained in them, namely, theſe two things.

Firſt, that the goſpel hath taken away the obligation of the law of Moſes; "in CHRIST JESUS "neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncir- "cumciſion."

Secondly, that according to the terms of the chriſtian religion, nothing will avail to our juſtification and acceptance with GOD, but the real renovation of our hearts and lives; "neither circumciſion, nor "uncircumciſion: but a new creature."

1. That the goſpel hath taken away the obligation of the law of Moſes. "In CHRIST JESUS," that is, now under the diſpenſation of the goſpel, "nei- "ther circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncir- "cumciſion." There never was any general obligation upon mankind to this rite of circumciſion, but only upon the ſeed of Abraham; but yet upon the preaching of the goſpel, many of the jewiſh chriſtians would have brought the Gentiles under this yoke;

yoke; pretending that chriſtianity was but a ſuperſtructure upon the law of Moſes, which together with the goſpel, was to be the religion of the whole world; and there was ſome colour for this, becauſe our SAVIOUR himſelf ſubmitted to this rite, and was circumciſed; which the apoſtle takes notice of in the ivth chap. of this epiſt. ver. 4. "When the "fulneſs of time was come, GOD ſent forth his "SON made of a woman, made under the law," that is, "circumciſed." And 'tis true indeed, that our bleſſed SAVIOUR was circumciſed, but not to ſignify to us the perpetuity of circumciſion, and the continuance of it under the chriſtian religion, but for a quite different end; as a teſtimony of his obedience to that law, which tho' afterwards it was to expire, yet was to be obeyed whilſt it was in force, by all that were born under it; he was "made un-"der the law," and "it became him," who came to teach mankind obedience to the laws of God, "to fulfil all righteouſneſs" himſelf. And therefore the apoſtle in this epiſtle, where he takes notice of this, that CHRIST was "made under the law," gives this reaſon of it, that he might be the fitter to free thoſe who were under it, from the ſervitude of it; he was "made under the law, that he might "redeem them that were under the law;" and that thoſe who were in the condition of ſervants before, might be ſet at liberty, and "receive the adoption "of ſons."

But how did his being "made under the law," qualify him "to redeem thoſe who were under the "law?" thus, by ſubmitting to it himſelf, he ſhewed that he owned the authority of it, and that

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he had no malice or enmity againſt it; as he himſelf expreſſes it, that "he came not to deſtroy the "law, but to fulfil it." And being fulfill'd, and having ſerv'd the time and end for which GOD intended it, it expir'd of it ſelf; like a law which is not made for perpetuity, but limited to a certain period. And our bleſſed SAVIOUR, who came with greater authority than Moſes, and gave greater teſtimony of his divine authority, had ſufficient power to declare the expiration of it; and by commiſſioning his diſciples before and after his death to preach the goſpel to the whole world, he put an end to that particular law and diſpenſation, which only concern'd the jewiſh nation, by giving a general law to all mankind.

So that from the death of our SAVIOUR, and his aſcenſion into heaven, upon which followed the general publication of the goſpel, the law of Moſes ceaſed, and according to our SAVIOUR's expreſs appointment, proſelytes were to be admitted into the chriſtian church only by baptiſm, and not by circumciſion. And if circumciſion, which was the ſign of that covenant, was laid aſide, then the whole obligation of that law and covenant which GOD had made with the Jews, was alſo ceaſed. It was once indeed the mark of GOD's choſen and peculiar people; but now that GOD hath revealed himſelf to the whole world by his SON, and offers ſalvation to all mankind, Gentiles as well as Jews, "the wall of ſeparation is broken down," and circumciſion, which was the mark of diſtinction between Jews and Gentiles, is taken away; and therefore he is ſaid "to have made peace by his

"croſs,

" croſs, and to have blotted out, and taken away " the hand-writing of ordinances, nailing it to his " croſs;" that is, from the time of his death to have taken away the obligation of the law of Moſes, tho' it was a good while after, before the Jews were wholly weaned from the veneration and uſe of it.

Nay, it was ſome time before the apoſtles were clearly convinc'd, that the goſpel was to be preached to the gentiles; this being one of thoſe truths, which our SAVIOUR promiſed after his departure, his SPIRIT ſhould lead them into the perfect knowledge of; and then they were fully inſtructed, that the law of Moſes was expired, and that it was no longer neceſſary to the ſalvation of men, that they ſhould be circumciſed, and keep that law. And though it was once enjoined by GOD himſelf to the Jews, and their obedience to it was neceſſary to their acceptance with GOD, yet now by CHRIST JESUS, GOD had offered ſalvation to men upon other terms; and whether they were circumciſed, or not, was of no moment to their juſtification or ſalvation one way or other; but provided they perform'd the condition of this new covenant of the goſpel, they were all alike capable of the divine favour and acceptance.

But I proceed to that, which I mainly intended to proſecute from theſe words; and that is the

Second particular in the text, namely that according to the terms of the goſpel, and the chriſtian religion, nothing will avail to our juſtification and acceptance with GOD, but the real renovation of our hearts and lives; " neither circumciſion nor uncircumciſion: but " a new creature." For the full explication of this, I ſhall do theſe three things. First,

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Firſt, ſhew what is imply'd in this phraſe of "a "new creature."

Secondly, that this is the great condition of our juſtification and acceptance with GOD, and that it is the ſame in ſubſtance with "faith perfected by "charity," and with "keeping the commmand-"ments of GOD."

Thirdly, that it is very reaſonable it ſhould be ſo.

1. What is imply'd in this phraſe of "a new crea-"ture." It is plain at firſt ſight, that it is a metaphorical expreſſion of that great and thorough change which is made in men by the goſpel, or the chriſtian religion. The ſcripture ſets forth to us this change by great variety of expreſſions, "by converſion, and "turning from our iniquities unto GOD;" "by re-"pentance," (which ſignifies a change of our mind and reſolution, and is in ſcripture call'd "repentance "from dead works," and "repentance unto life;") "by regeneration, or being born again;" "by re-"ſurrection from the dead, and riſing to newneſs of "life;" "by ſanctification," and being "waſhed "and cleans'd" from all filthineſs and impurity, (which three laſt metaphors are imply'd in baptiſm, which is called regeneration, Tit. iii. 5. "According "to his mercy he ſaved us by the waſhing of rege-"neration, and renewing of the HOLY GHOST;" and our being "born again of water and the HOLY "GHOST," John iii. 3. "Except a man be born again, "&c." and ver. 5. "Except a man be born of water "and of the SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the king-"dom of GOD;" and "the purifying of our con-"ſciences." Heb. x. 22. "having our hearts ſprink-

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" led from an evil conſcience, and our bodies waſh'd " with pure water;" and " the anſwer of a good " conſcience towards GOD," 1 Pet. iii. 21. " bap- " tiſm doth now ſave us, not the putting away of " the filth of the fleſh, but the anſwer of a good con- " ſcience towards GOD;" and finally our being " baptiz'd into the death and reſurrection of " CHRIST," Rom. vi. 3, 4. " Know ye not that " ſo many of us as were baptized into JESUS " CHRIST, were baptized into his death; therefore " we are buried with him by baptiſm into death, " that like as CHRIST was raiſed up from the dead " by the glory of the FATHER, even ſo we alſo " ſhould walk in newneſs of life.") And laſtly, this change is ſet forth to us by renovation, and our being made " new creatures, and new men," 2 Cor. v. 17. " Therefore if any man be in CHRIST," that is, profeſſeth himſelf a chriſtian, " he is a new " creature; old things are paſt away, behold all " things are become new." And ſo likewiſe, Eph. iv. 22, 23, 24. this great change is expreſt by " putting off concerning the former converſation, " the old man, which is corrupt according to the " luſts of deceit, and being renewed in the ſpirit of " our minds, and putting on the new man, which " after GOD is created in righteouſneſs and true ho- " lineſs." The expreſſion is very emphatical, " re- " newed in the ſpirit of our minds," that is, in our very minds and ſpirits, to ſignify to us that it is a moſt inward and thorough change, reaching to the very center of our ſouls and ſpirits. And, Coloſſ. iii. 9, 10, 11. it is repreſented much after the ſame manner, " ſeeing ye have put off the old man with " his

" his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is " renewed in knowledge after the image of him that " created him, where there is neither greek nor jew, " circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, scy- " thian, bond nor free; but CHRIST is all and in " all." Which is the same with what the apostle says here in the text, " that in CHRIST JESUS " neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor un- " circumcision: but a new creature;" that is, these external marks and differences signify nothing: but this inward change, " the new creature, CHRIST " formed in us," this in the christian religion is " all in all." SERM. CVI.

But that we may the more clearly understand the just importance of this metaphor of " a new creature, " or a new creation," I shall,

First, consider what it doth certainly signify, by comparing this metaphorical phrase with other plain texts of scripture.

And secondly, that it doth not import what some would extend it to, so as to found doctrines of great consequence upon the single strength of this, and the like metaphors in scripture, without any manner of countenance from plain texts.

First, I shall consider what this metaphor doth certainly import, so as to be undeniably evident from other more clear and full texts of scripture, namely, these two things.

1. The greatness of this change.

2. That it is effected and wrought by a divine power.

1. The greatness of this change; it is called καινὴ κτίσις, " a new creation;" as if the christian doc-

trine, firmly entertained and believed, did as it were mould and faſhion men over again, transforming them into a quite other ſort of perſons than what they were before, and made ſuch a change in them, as the creating power of GOD did, in bringing this beautiful and orderly things out of their dark and rude chaos. Thus the apoſtle repreſents it, 2 Cor. iv. 6. "GOD who commanded the light to "ſhine out of darkneſs," (alluding to the firſt creation) "hath ſhined into our hearts, to give the light "of the knowledge of the glory of GOD in the face of "JESUS CHRIST." We are tranſlated from one extreme to another, Acts xxvi. 18. When our LORD ſends Paul to preach the goſpel to the gentiles, he tells him what a change it would make in them, by "opening their eyes, and turning them from dark-"neſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto "GOD." And St. Peter expreſſes the change which chriſtianity makes in men, by their being "call'd "out of darkneſs into a marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. And ſo St. Paul, Eph. v. 8. "Ye were "ſometimes darkneſs, but now are ye light in the "LORD."

And indeed, wherever the doctrine of CHRIST hath its full effect, and perfect work, it makes a mighty change both in their inward principles, and outward practice; it darts a new light into their minds, ſo that they ſee things otherwiſe than they did before, and form a different judgment of things from what they did before; it endows them with a new principle, and new reſolutions, gives them another ſpirit, and another temper, a quite different ſenſe and guſt of things from what they formerly had.

had. And this inward change of their minds neceſſarily produceth a proportionable change in their lives and converſations, ſo that the man ſteers quite another courſe, acts after another rate, and drives on quite other deſigns from what he did before. SERM. CVI.

And this is remarkably ſeen in thoſe who are reclaimed from impiety and prophaneneſs to religion, and from a vicious to a virtuous courſe of life. The change is great and real in all; but not ſo ſenſible and viſible in ſome, as others; in thoſe who are made good by the inſenſible ſteps of a pious and virtuous education; as in thoſe who are tranſlated out of a quite contrary ſtate, and "turn'd from "the power of Satan unto GOD," and "tranſlated "out of the kingdom of darkneſs, into the kingdom "CHRIST;" which was the caſe of the heathen world, in their firſt converſion to chriſtianity.

Secondly, this change is effected and wrought by a divine power, of the ſame kind with that, which created the world, and raiſed up CHRIST JESUS from the dead; two great and glorious inſtances of the divine power, and to theſe the ſcripture frequently alludes, when it ſpeaks of this new creation. "GOD, "who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, "hath ſhined into our hearts." "Like as CHRIST "was raiſed from the dead by the glory of the FA-"THER, ſo we alſo are raiſed to newneſs of life," ſaith St. Paul, Rom. vi. 4. And to the ſame purpoſe the apoſtle ſpeaks, Epheſ. i. 19, 20. "And that ye may "know what is the exceeding greatneſs of his power "to us-ward who believe, according to the operation "of his mighty power, which he wrought in "CHRIST,

" CHRIST, when he raiſed him from the dead." So that our renovation, and being made new creatures, is an inſtance of the ſame glorious power, which exerted it ſelf in the firſt creation of things, and in the reſurrection of our LORD JESUS CHRIST from the dead; but not altogether after the ſame manner, as I ſhall ſhew under the next head.

I ſhould now in the ſecond place proceed to ſhew, that this metaphor of a new creation doth not import what ſome men would extend it to, ſo as to found doctrines of great conſequence upon the ſingle ſtrength of this and other like metaphors of ſcripture, without any manner of countenance and confirmation from plain texts. But this I reſerve to another diſcourſe.

SERMON CVII.

Of the nature of regeneration, and its neceſſity, in order to juſtification and ſalvation.

GALAT. vi. 15.

For in CHRIST JESUS, *neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion; but a new creature.*

SERM. CVII. The ſecond ſermon on this text.

IN theſe words are contained theſe two things.

Firſt, that the goſpel hath taken away the obligation of the law, having taken away the ſign of that covenant, which was circumciſion.

Secondly,

Secondly, that according to the terms of the goſpel, and the chriſtian religion, nothing will avail to our juſtification and acceptance with GOD, but the real renovation of our hearts and lives. For the full explication of this, I propounded to do theſe three things.

I. To ſhew what is imply'd in this phraſe of "a "new creature.

II. That this is the great condition of our juſtification and acceptance with GOD, and that it is the ſame in ſenſe and ſubſtance with thoſe other expreſſions, in the two parallel texts of "faith perfected by "charity," and "keeping the commandments of "God."

III. That it is very reaſonable that this ſhould be the condition of our juſtification, and acceptance to the favour of GOD.

I began with the firſt of theſe, viz. to ſhew what is imply'd in this phraſe of "a new creature;" as to which I ſhew'd,

Firſt, What this metaphor doth certainly import, ſo as to be undeniably evident from other more clear and full texts of ſcripture; namely, the greatneſs of this change; and that it is effected by a divine power. I now proceed,

Secondly, to ſhew that it doth not import what ſome would extend it to, and that ſo as to found doctrines of great conſequence upon the meer and ſingle ſtrength of this and other like metaphors of ſcripture, without any manner of countenance and confirmation from plain texts: ſuch doctrines as theſe three.

1. That

1. That as the creation was by an irreſiſtible act of the divine power, ſo is this new creation, or converſion of a ſinner.

2. That as creatures were meerly paſſive in their being made, and contributed nothing at all to it; no more do we to our converſion and regeneration.

3. That as the creation of the ſeveral ranks and kinds of creatures was in an inſtant, and effected by the powerful word of GOD, only ſaying, "let ſuch "and ſuch things be," and immediately they were; ſo this new creation, or the work of regeneration is in an inſtant, and admits of no degrees.

Concerning theſe three doctrines of great moment and conſequence in divinity, I ſhall ſhew, with all the clearneſs and brevity I can, that they are built ſolely upon metaphors of ſcripture, tortur'd and ſtrain'd too far without any real ground or foundation from ſcripture or reaſon; nay, contrary to the tenor of the one and the dictates of the other; nay indeed contrary to the general experience of the operation of GOD's grace upon the minds of men in their converſion.

Firſt, it is pretended, that as the creation was by an irreſiſtible act of the divine power, ſo is the new creation, or the converſion of a ſinner; and this is ſolely argued from the metaphorical expreſſions of ſcripture concerning converſion; ſuch as being "cal-"led out of darkneſs into light," alluding to that powerful word of GOD, which in the firſt creation "commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs; be-"ing quicken'd and rais'd to a new life;" and from this metaphor here in the text, of "a new "creation."

But

But ſurely it is a dangerous thing in divinity, to build doctrines upon metaphors, eſpecially if we ſtrain them to all the ſimilitudes which a quick and lively imagination can find out; whereas ſome one obvious thing is commonly intended in the metaphor, and the meaning is abſolv'd and acquitted in that, and it is folly to purſue it into all thoſe ſimilitudes, which a good fancy may ſuggeſt. When our SAVIOUR ſays, "that he will come as a thief in the "night," it is plain what he means; that the day of judgment will ſurprize the careleſs world, when they leaſt look for it, that "he will come at an hour "when they are not aware;" and tho' he reſemble his coming to that of "a thief in the night," yet here is nothing of robbery in the caſe. So here when the change which chriſtianity makes in men, is called "a new creation," this only imports the greatneſs of the change, which by the power of GOD's grace is made upon the hearts and lives of men; and the metaphor is ſufficiently abſolv'd in this plain ſenſe and meaning of it, agreeable to the literal expreſſions of ſcripture concerning this thing, and there is no need that this change ſhould in all other reſpects anſwer the work of creation; and conſequently there is no neceſſity that it ſhould be effected in an irreſiſtible manner, or that we ſhould be altogether paſſive in this change, and that we ſhould no ways concur to it by any act of our own, or that this work ſhould be done in an inſtant, and admit of no ſteps and degrees.

It is not neceſſary that this change ſhould be effected in an irreſiſtible manner. GOD may do ſo, when he pleaſeth, without any injury to his creatures; for

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it is certainly no wrong to any man to be made good and happy againſt his will; and I do not deny, but that GOD ſometimes does ſo. The call of the diſciples to follow CHRIST ſeems to have been a very ſudden and forcible impreſſion upon their minds, without any appearing reaſon for it; for it is not reaſonable for any man to leave his calling, and follow every one that bids him do ſo. The converſion of Saul from a perſecutor of chriſtianity, to a zealous preacher of it, was certainly effected, if not in an irreſiſtible, yet in a very forcible and violent manner. The converſion of three thouſand at one ſermon, when the HOLY GHOST deſcended in a viſible manner upon the apoſtles, was certainly the effect of a mighty and over-powering degree of GOD's grace. And the like may be ſaid of the ſudden converſion of ſo many perſons from heatheniſm, and great wickedneſs and impiety of life, to the ſincere profeſſion of chriſtianity, by the preaching of the apoſtles afterwards.

But that this is not of abſolute neceſſity, nor the ordinary method of GOD's grace, to work upon the minds of men in ſo over-powering, much leſs in an irreſiſtible manner, is as plain as any thing of that nature can be, both from experience, and the reaſon of the thing, and the conſtant tenor of the ſcripture. We find that many (perhaps the greateſt part) of thoſe that are good are made ſo by the inſenſible ſteps and degrees of a religious education, and having been never vicious, can give no great account of any ſenſible change, only that when they came to years of underſtanding, they conſider'd things more, and the principles that were inſtill'd into them in their younger years, did put forth themſelves more vigo-

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rouſly at that time, as ſeeds ſprout out of the ground, after they have a good while been buried, and lain hid in the earth. SERM. CVII.

And it is contrary to reaſon, to make an irreſiſtible act of divine power neceſſary to our repentance, and converſion; becauſe this neceſſarily involves in it two things which ſeem very unreaſonable.

Firſt, that no man repents upon conſideration and choice, but upon meer force and violent neceſſity, which quite takes away the virtue of repentance, whatever virtue there may be in the conſequent acts of a regenerate ſtate.

Secondly, it implies that the converſion and repentance of thoſe, upon whom GOD doth not work irreſiſtibly is impoſſible, which is the utmoſt can be ſaid to excuſe the impenitency of men, by taking it off from their own choice, and laying it upon the impoſſibility of the thing, and an utter diſability in them to chooſe and do otherwiſe.

And it is likewiſe contrary to the conſtant tenor of the bible, which ſuppoſeth that men do very frequently reſiſt the grace and HOLY SPIRIT of GOD. It is ſaid of the phariſees by our SAVIOUR, Luke vii. 30. "that they rejected the counſel of GOD "againſt themſelves;" that is, the merciful deſign of GOD for their ſalvation. And of the Jews, Acts vii. 51. "that they always reſiſted the HOLY "GHOST." So that ſome operations of GOD's grace and HOLY SPIRIT are reſiſtible, and ſuch, as if men did not reſiſt them, would be effectual to bring them to faith and repentance, elſe why are the phariſees ſaid "to reject the counſel of GOD againſt "themſelves," that is, to their own ruin; imply-

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ing, that if they had not rejected it, they might have been ſaved; and if they had, it had been without irreſiſtible grace; for that which was offered to them, was actually reſiſted by them. Other texts plainly ſhew, that the reaſon of mens impenitency and unbelief is not any thing wanting on God's part, but on theirs; as thoſe known texts, wherein our SAVIOUR laments the caſe of Jeruſalem, becauſe they obſtinately brought deſtruction upon themſelves, Luke xix. 42. "If thou hadſt known in this thy "day, the things that belong to thy peace:" intimating that they might have known them, ſo as to have prevented that deſolation which was coming upon them, and was a forerunner of their eternal ruin; "but now they are hid from thine eyes;" intimating, that then GOD gave them up to their own blindneſs and obſtinacy; but the time was, when they might have "known the things of their peace;" which cannot be upon the ſuppoſition of the neceſſity of an irreſiſtible act of GOD's grace to their converſion, and repentance; becauſe then without that they could not have repented, and if that had been afforded to them, they had infallibly repented. So likewiſe in that other text, Matth. xxiii. 37. "Oh! Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, how often would I "have gathered thee, even as an hen gathereth her "chickens under her wings, and you would not." And in John v. 40. "Ye will not come unto me "that ye might have life." "He would have gathered "them, and they would not;" he would have given them life, but "they would not come to him." Are theſe ſerious and compaſſionate expoſtulations and declarations of our SAVIOUR's gracious intention

tion towards them, any ways conſiſtent with an impoſſibility of their repentance? which yet muſt be ſaid, if irreſiſtible grace be neceſſary thereto; for then repentance is impoſſible without it, and that it was not afforded to them is plain, becauſe they did not repent. The ſame may be ſaid of that ſolemn declaration of GOD, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. "As I live, "ſaith the LORD GOD, I have no pleaſure in the "death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn "from his way and live." Can it be ſaid that GOD hath "no pleaſure in the death of ſinners," and yet be true, that he denies to the greateſt part of them, that grace which is neceſſary to their repentance? upon this ſuppoſition, how can it be true, "that if the mighty works that were done in Cho-"razin, and Bethſaida, had been done in Tyre and "Sidon, they would have repented," Matth. xi. 21. ſince irreſiſtible grace did not accompany thoſe miracles? for if it had, Chorazin and Bethſaida had repented, and without it Tyre and Sidon could not repent.

The ſame difficulty is in thoſe texts, wherein GOD is repreſented as expecting the repentance and converſion of ſinners; and our SAVIOUR wondering at their unbelief and hardneſs of heart, and upbraiding them with it, Iſa. v. 4. "What could I have "done more to my vineyard, that I have not done "in it? wherefore when I looked that it ſhould "bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Mark vi. 6. 'tis ſaid "our SAVIOUR marvell'd at "the unbelief of the Jews." And chap. xvi. 14. "that he upbraided his diſciples with their unbelief "and hardneſs of heart." But why ſhould the repentance

pentance of ſinners be expected, or their unbelief marvell'd at, or indeed be upbraided to them, by him who knew it impoſſible to them, without an irreſiſtible power and grace, which he knew likewiſe was not afforded to them? neither GOD nor man have reaſon to wonder that any man does not do that, which at the ſame time they certainly know he cannot do.

The bottom of all that is ſaid to avoid this preſſing difficulty, is this; "that this impotence and "diſability of ſinners is their ſin, and therefore "cannot be pleaded in their excuſe, for their impe-"nitency; but GOD may ſtill juſtly require that of "them, which they had once a natural power to "do, but wilfully forfeited and loſt it; they had "this power in Adam, and forfeited it by his diſ-"obedience." To ſhew how ſlight this evaſion is, I need not run into that argument, how far we are guilty of the ſin of our firſt parents. That by that firſt tranſgreſſion and diſobedience all mankind ſuffers, and our natures are extremely corrupted and depraved, cannot be denied; but the corruption of our natures is a thing very different from perſonal guilt, ſtrictly and properly ſo call'd. I will take the buſineſs much ſhorter, and granting that mankind had in Adam a natural power to have continued obedient to the laws of GOD, yet ſince "by "one man ſin enter'd into the world, and all are "now ſinners," here is an obligation to repentance, as well as to obedience, and men ſhall be condemned for their impenitency. I ask now, whether in Adam we had a power to repent? 'tis certain Adam had not this power, and therefore I cannot ſee how

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we could loſe it, and forfeit it in him. Adam indeed had a natural power not to have ſinned, and ſo not to have needed repentance; but no power to repent in the ſtate of innocency, becauſe in that ſtate repentance was impoſſible, becauſe there could be no occaſion for it. He had it not after his fall, becauſe by that he forfeited all his power to that which is ſpiritually good. 'Tis ſaid indeed he had it in innocency, but forfeited it by his fall; ſo that he had it, when there was no occaſion or poſſibility of the exerciſe of it, and loſt it when there was occaſion for it: or if he did not loſe it by his fall, we have it ſtill, and then there is no need of any ſupernatural, much leſs irreſiſtible grace to repentance; ſo that our impotency as to the particular duty of repentance, cannot be charged upon us as our fault, not ſo much as upon the account of original ſin.

But the want of this power is the conſequent and juſt puniſhment of our firſt tranſgreſſion. Be it ſo; but if this impotency ſtill remain in all thoſe to whom GOD doth not afford his irreſiſtible grace, how comes the grace offer'd in the goſpel to aggravate the impenitency of men, and increaſe their condemnation? For if it be no remedy againſt this impotency, how comes it to inflame the guilt of impenitency? Or how is it grace to offer mercy to thoſe upon their repentance, who were out of a poſſibility of repenting; and yet to puniſh them more ſeverely for their impenitency after this offer made to them, which they cannot accept without that grace which GOD is reſolved not to afford them? If this be the caſe, the greateſt favour had been to have had no ſuch

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offer made to them, and it had been happier for mankind, that "the grace of GOD had not appeared to all men," but only to thoſe who ſhall irreſiſtibly be made partakers of the benefit of it.

Secondly, another doctrine grounded upon this metaphor of "a new creation," is, that we are merely paſſive in the work of converſion, and regeneration, and contribute nothing to it; that GOD does all, and we do nothing at all; and this follows from the former, eſpecially if we allow that metaphor as far as it will carry us. For as the firſt creation of things was by an irreſiſtible act of divine power, ſo the things that were made, were only paſſive in their creation; and as they could make no reſiſtance, ſo neither could they contribute any thing to their being what they are. And this doctrine is not only argued from the metaphor of "a new creation," but from ſeveral other metaphors uſed in ſcripture to deſcribe our natural ſtate; as namely, "darkneſs, blindneſs," and our being "dead in treſpaſſes and ſins;" from whence it is inferr'd, that we contribute no more to our renovation, than darkneſs doth to the introduction of light, than a blind man can do to the recovery of his ſight, or a dead man to his own reſurrection; but are wholly paſſive in this work. And to countenance this notion, they make great advantage of the character which is given in ſcripture of the moſt degenerate heathen, taking it for granted, that their condition is the true ſtandard of a natural and unregenerate ſtate; and to this purpoſe they inſiſt particularly upon that deſcription of the gentile idolaters, Eph. iv. 18, 19. "Having

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" Having the underſtanding darkened, being alie-
" nated from the life of GOD, through the igno-
" rance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs
" of their hearts; who being paſt feeling, have
" given themſelves over to laſciviouſneſs; to work
" all uncleanneſs with greedineſs." Which is indeed a deſcription of men in their natural ſtate, but not of all, but of ſuch as by the worſt ſort of vicious practices of the groſſeſt idolatry, and moſt abominable lewdneſs, were degenerated to the utmoſt, ſo that their condition ſeemed deſperate, without a miraculous and an extraordinary grace of GOD, which was probably afforded to many of theſe. In like manner they argue the common condition of mankind, from the deſcription which is given of the wickedneſs of men, before GOD brought the flood upon them, Gen. vi. 5. " GOD ſaw that the wick-
" edneſs of man was great in the earth, and that
" every imagination of the thoughts of his heart
" was only evil continually." This they make the character of all men in their natural ſtate, whereas this is a deſcription of an extraordinary degeneracy of men, ſignifying that the world was then extremely bad, and depraved to the higheſt degree; for GOD gives this as a reaſon why he was reſolved to drown the world, and " to deſtroy man
" from the face of the earth," becauſe " their
" wickedneſs was grown to ſo great an height."
But if this were a deſcription of the natural ſtate of mankind, this could be no particular reaſon for bringing a flood upon the world at that time, there being the ſame reaſon for it, for fifteen hundred years before, and ever will be the ſame reaſon to the end of

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the world, that is, that men are naturally corrupted and depraved. Surely they conſider the ſcripture very ſuperficially, that interpret it at this rate.

'Tis too true, that the nature of man is ſadly corrupted and depraved; but not ſo bad as by vicious practices and habits it may be made; all men are not equally at the ſame diſtance from the grace of GOD; ſome are nearer to the kingdom of GOD than others, and leſs force and violence will ſerve "to reſcue them from the power of Satan," and "to tranſplant them into the kingdom of CHRIST." The prevalency and dominion of ſin makes an unregenerate ſtate, as the prevalency of grace puts a man into a regenerate ſtate. An unregenerate man is not neceſſarily as bad as is poſſible, no more than it is neceſſary to a regenerate ſtate, that a man be perfectly good; ſo that it is a great miſtake to argue the common condition of all mankind, from the deſcriptions that are given in the ſcripture of the worſt of men; and therefore if it were granted that irreſiſtible grace were neceſſary for the converſion of ſuch, it will not follow that the ſame is neceſſary to all.

All unregenerate men are not equally devoid of a ſenſe of GOD, and ſpiritual things; they have many convictions of what they ought to be and do, and under thoſe convictions are very capable of perſuaſion, which dead men are not. The grace of GOD is neceſſary to the converſion of a ſinner, but it is not neceſſary that he ſhould be only paſſive in this work. Experience tells us the contrary, that we can do ſomething, that we can co-operate with the grace of GOD; and the ſcripture tells us the ſame, and makes it an argument and encouragement to

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us " to work out our own ſalvation, " becauſe " GOD works in us both to will and to do of his " own goodneſs," Philip. ii. 12, 13. Beſides that, it is the greateſt and juſteſt diſcouragement in the world to all endeavours of repentance and reformation, to tell men that they can do nothing in it. He that is ſure of this, that he can do nothing in this work, is a fool if he make any attempt to become better, becauſe he ſtruggles with an impoſſibility; and if the work will be done at all, it will be done without him, and he neither can, nor ought to have any hand in it. But will any metaphor bear men out againſt ſo palpable an abſurdity as this?

And yet after all, there is no force in theſe metaphors, to prove what they aim at by them. For if to be dead in ſins ſignifies an utter impotency to goodneſs, then to be dead to ſin muſt on the contrary ſignify an impoſſibility of ſinning; for juſt as the unregenerate man is " dead in ſin," ſo he that is regenerate is ſaid in ſcripture to be " dead to ſin :" but yet the beſt of regenerate men, notwithſtanding they are " dead to ſin, and alive to GOD, do offend in many " things," and too frequently fall into ſin. Why then ſhould the metaphor be ſo ſtrong on the one ſide, that a man who is ſaid " to be dead in ſin," ſhould not be able ſo much as to co-operate with the grace of GOD in the work of repentance and converſion?

In ſhort, if this be true, that men in an unregenerate and unconverted ſtate are perfectly dead, and have no more ſenſe of ſpiritual things, than a dead man hath of natural objects, then all precepts and exhortations to repentance, and all promiſes and

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threatnings to argue and perſuade men thereto are vain, and to no purpoſe; and it would be every whit as proper and reaſonable for us to preach in the church-yard, over the graves of dead men, as in the church to the unregenerate; becauſe they can no more act and move towards their own recovery out of a ſtate of ſin and death, than the dead bodies can riſe out of their graves.

But it is ſaid, that the end of exhortations and promiſes is not to declare to men their power, but their duty. But if they be inſenſible, it is to as little purpoſe to declare to them their duty, as their power. Beſides, it will be a hard thing to convince men that any thing is their duty, which at the ſame time we declare to them to be out of their power.

But this is pelagianiſm, to ſay that of ourſelves we can repent and turn to GOD. And who ſays we can of ourſelves do this beſides the pelagians? We affirm the neceſſity of GOD's grace hereto, and withal the neceſſity of our co-operating with the grace of GOD. We ſay that without the powerful excitation and aid of GOD's grace, no man can repent and turn to GOD; but we ſay likewiſe, that GOD cannot be properly ſaid to aid and aſſiſt thoſe, who do nothing themſelves.

But men can do no more than they do, and therefore are juſtly condemned. Not in the work of converſion ſure; if they can do nothing at all. But they can do more by way of preparation towards it. Suppoſe they do all they can towards it, will this ſave them, or will GOD upon this irreſiſtibly work their converſion? No, they ſay, notwithſtanding

withſtanding any preparatory work that we can do, converſion may not follow; how then does this mend the matter? SERM. CVII.

But ſtill they ſay the fault is in mens want of will, and not of power; "you will not come unto me, "that ye might have life." But can they will to come? No, that they cannot neither. Why then it is ſtill want of power that hinders them. The offer of life is a very gracious offer to them that are guilty, and liable to death, as we all are; but not if the condition be utterly impoſſible to us, tho' the impoſſibility ſprings from our own fault, as I will plainly ſhew by a fair inſtance. A prince offers a pardon to a traitor faſt lock'd in chains, if he will come to him and ſubmit himſelf; but if he be ſtill detained in chains, and the prince do not ſome way or other help him to his liberty, 'tis ſo far from being a favour to offer him a pardon upon theſe terms, that it is a cruel deriſion of his miſery, to ſay to him "you will not come to me "that you may be pardon'd;" and this notwithſtanding that his being caſt into chains, was the effect of his own crime and fault; the application is obvious. I ſhould now proceed to anſwer an objection or two, and then to give a clear ſtate of this matter, ſo as is moſt agreeable to ſcripture, and the attributes and perfections of GOD; but this I ſhall reſerve for another diſcourſe.

SERMON

SERMON CVIII.

Of the nature of regeneration, and its neceſſity, in order to juſtification and ſalvation.

GALAT. vi. 15.

For in CHRIST JESUS, *neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion; but a new creature.*

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THE point which I am upon from theſe words is, "that according to the terms of "the goſpel, nothing will avail to our juſti-"fication, but the real renovation of our hearts and "lives."

The third ſermon on this text.

For the full explication of this, I propounded to ſhew,

Firſt, what is implied in this expreſſion of the "new creature."

Secondly, that this is the great condition of our juſtification and acceptance with GOD.

Thirdly, that it is highly reaſonable that this ſhould be the condition of our juſtification.

In ſpeaking to the firſt of theſe, I have ſhewed, 1ſt, what this metaphor doth certainly import; and 2dly, that it doth not import what ſome would extend it to, whereon to found ſuch doctrines as theſe.

Firſt, That as the creation was an irreſiſtible act of the divine power, ſo is this new creation, or the converſion of a ſinner.

Secondly,

Secondly, as creatures are merely paſſive in their being made, and contributed nothing at all to it, no more do we in our converſion, and regeneration.

Thirdly, that as the creation of the ſeveral kinds and ranks of creatures was effected in an inſtant, by the powerful word of GOD, ſaying, "let ſuch and "ſuch things be," and immediately they were; ſo this new creation is in an inſtant, and admits of no degrees.

The firſt of theſe I have conſider'd, and enter'd upon the ſecond; namely, that as the creatures were merely paſſive in their being made, and contributed nothing at all thereto, no more do we in our converſion and regeneration.

This I told you does plainly make void all the precepts and exhortations, and all the promiſes and threatnings of ſcripture, to argue and perſuade men to repentance.

That which remains to be done upon this argument, is,

Firſt, to anſwer an objection or two, which are commonly urged by the aſſertors of this doctrine, that we are merely paſſive in the work of converſion.

Secondly, to give a clear ſtate of this matter, ſo as is moſt agreeable to ſcripture, and the attributes and perfections of GOD. For the

Firſt, the objections are theſe three.

1. That if we be not merely paſſive in the work of regeneration and converſion, we aſcribe the whole glory of this work to our ſelves, and not to GOD.

Or

Or 2dly, we do however extenuate or leſſen the grace of GOD, if there be any active concurrence and endeavours of our own towards this change.

3dly, they ask St. Paul's queſtion, "who maketh "thee to differ?" and think it impoſſible to be anſwer'd, if the efficacy of GOD's grace do depend upon our concurrence and compliance with it. Theſe are all the material objections I know; to every one of which I hope to give a very clear and ſufficient anſwer.

1. Objection, if we be not merely paſſive in the work of regeneration and converſion, we aſcribe the whole glory of this work to our ſelves, and not to GOD. But that I certainly know this objection is commonly made, and have ſeen it in very conſiderable authors, I could not believe that men of ſo good ſenſe could make it. For this is to ſay, that if we do any thing in this work, tho' we acknowledge that what we do in it, we do by the aſſiſtance of GOD's grace, we aſcribe it wholly to our ſelves, and rob GOD altogether of the glory of his grace; or in plainer terms, it is to ſay, that tho' we ſay GOD does never ſo much, and we but very little in this work, yet if we do not ſay that GOD does all, and we nothing at all, we take the whole work to our ſelves, and ſay GOD does nothing at all; which let any one that conſiders what we ſay judge, whether we ſay ſo or no.

The ſcripture which never robs GOD of the glory of his grace, does I'm ſure aſcribe our converſion and repentance, our regeneration and ſanctification to ſeveral cauſes; to the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, to his miniſters, to his word, and to our ſelves. To the

the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, as the principal author, and efficient. Hence we are ſaid "to be born "of the SPIRIT, to be ſanctified by the renew-"ing of the HOLY GHOST." To the miniſters of GOD, as the inſtruments of our converſion. Hence they are ſaid "to turn men to righteouſneſs, to "convert a ſinner from the evil of his ways, to "ſave ſouls from death, to ſave themſelves, and "them that hear them; to be our ſpiritual fathers, "and to beget us in CHRIST." To the word of GOD, as the ſubordinate means and inſtruments of our converſion. Hence we are ſaid "to be be-"gotten by the word of truth, to be ſanctified by "the truth." And laſtly, to our ſelves, as concurring ſome way or other to this work. Hence we are ſaid "to believe and repent, to turn from "our evil ways, and to turn to the LORD, to "cleanſe and purify our ſelves." Hence likewiſe are thoſe frequent commands in ſcripture, "to amend our "ways and doings, to waſh our hearts from wicked-"neſs, to repent and turn ourſelves, and to make our-"ſelves new hearts, and new ſpirits." So that all theſe cauſes, the SPIRIT of GOD, his miniſters, his word, and we our ſelves, do all ſome way or other concur and contribute to this effect. GOD indeed is the principal, and hath ſo great an hand in this work from beginning to end, that all the reſt are nothing in compariſon, and we do well to aſcribe to him the glory of it, "that no fleſh may glory in his "ſight:" but nevertheleſs in ſtrictneſs of ſpeech ſufficiently warranted by ſcripture, the miniſters of GOD, and the word of GOD, and we our ſelves, do all co-operate ſome way or other to our converſion, and

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regeneration; and by aſcribing to any of theſe ſuch parts as they truly have in this work, GOD is not robbed of any part of the glory of his grace, much leſs of the whole. Much leſs is it the aſcribing it all to our ſelves, whom we affirm to have the leaſt part in it, nor worthy to be mentioned, in compariſon of the riches of GOD's grace towards us. And yet unleſs we do ſomething, what can be the meaning of "making our ſelves new hearts and new ſpirits." Is it only that we ſhould be paſſive to the irreſiſtible operations of GOD's grace? that is, that we ſhould not hinder, what we can neither hinder nor promote; that we ſhould ſo demean our ſelves, as of neceſſity we muſt whether we will or no. So then "to make our ſelves new hearts and new "ſpirits," is to do nothing at all towards the hindrance or furtherance of this work; and if this be the meaning of it, it is a precept and exhortation juſt as fit for ſtones, as for men; that is, very improper for either.

2. Objection. But however, we do extenuate and leſſen the grace of GOD, if there be any active concurrence and endeavours on our part towards this change. For anſwer to this, three things deſerve to be conſider'd.

Firſt, it is very well worthy our conſideration, that they who make this objection, have the confidence to pretend that they do not diminiſh the grace of GOD, by confining it to a very ſmall part of mankind in compariſon; nay, they will needs face us down, that by this very thing they do very much exalt and magnify it, and that the grace of GOD is ſo much the greater, by how much the fewer they

they are that are partakers of it. But I hope they only mean that the grace is greater to themselves; (in which conceit there is commonly as much of envy as gratitude) but surely they cannot mean that the grace which is limited to a few, is greater in it self, and upon the whole matter, than that which is extended to a great many; it being a downright contradiction, to say that the grace of GOD is magnified by being confined. For at this rate of reasoning, the lesser it is, the greater it must be, and by undeniable consequence would be greatest of all, if it were none at all. So that it seems the grace of GOD may be extenuated in favour of our selves, but when we do so we must say we magnify it.

Secondly, but to come close to the objection; tho' it be true, that if GOD's grace in our conversion do not do all; it does not do so much as if it did all; yet this is really no injury or dishonour to the grace of GOD; and tho' in some sense it doth extenuate it, it doth not in truth and reality take off from the glory of it. In my opinion, the grace and favour of a prince is not the less in offering a pardon to a traitor, who puts forth his hand and gladly receives it, than if he forc'd it upon him whether he would or no. I am sure it is in the first case much fitter to give it, and he on whom it is conferr'd much better qualified to receive it. 'Tis no disparagement to a prince's favour, that it is bestow'd on one who is in some measure qualified to receive it. But be it more or less in one case than the other, this is certain, that in both cases the man owes his life to the great grace and goodness of his prince; and I cannot see how it lessens the grace, that the miserable

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object of it, the guilty and condemned perſon, was either by his humble ſubmiſſion, or thankful acceptance of it, in ſome degree better qualified to receive ſuch a favour, than an obſtinate refuſer of it.

Thirdly, which is the principal conſideration of all, we muſt take great heed, that while we endeavour to make GOD to do all in the converſion of ſinners, we do not by this means charge upon him the ruin and deſtruction of impenitent ſinners, which I doubt we ſhould do, if we make the reaſon of their impenitency and ruin their utter impotency and diſability to repent; and we certainly make this the reaſon of their impenitency and ruin if there be no other difference but this between penitent and impenitent ſinners, namely, that in the one GOD works repentance by an irreſiſtible act of his power, ſo that he cannot but repent, and denies this grace to the other, without which he cannot poſſibly repent. But the ſcripture chargeth the deſtruction of men upon themſelves, and lays their impenitency at their own door. "O Iſrael! thou haſt deſtroyed thy "ſelf; but in me is thy help," Hoſea xiii. 9. But where is the help, when the grace abſolutely neceſſary to repentance is denied? and how is their deſtruction of themſelves, if it is unavoidable, let them do what they can? Iſa. v. 3, 4. GOD appeals to his people Iſrael, that nothing was wanting on his part, that was fit and neceſſary to be done, that they might bring forth the fruits of repentance, and better obedience. "And now, O inhabitants of Jeru- "ſalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, "between me and my vineyard: what could have "been done more to my vineyard, that I have not

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" done in it? wherefore when I looked that it " ſhould bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild " grapes?" Is it true that GOD hath done all that was neceſſary to have brought them to repentance? then if irreſiſtible grace be neceſſary, he afforded them that; but that was not afforded them, becauſe then they muſt unavoidably have repented, and there had been no cauſe for this complaint: if he did not afford it, but only the outward means of repentance without the inward grace (as ſome ſay;) then it is eaſy to judge why they did not repent; becauſe they could not; and there ſeems to be no cauſe either of wonder, or complaint. Beſides that it will be hard to juſtify that ſaying, " what could I have " done more to my vineyard, that I have not done " in it?" when it is acknowledg'd by the aſſertors of this doctrine, that the main thing was not done, and that without which all the reſt ſignify'd nothing, leaving them under the ſame impoſſibility of repentance, as if nothing at all had been done to them. SERM. CVIII.

But now upon our ſuppoſition, that ſufficient grace was afforded to them, which they wilfully neglected to make uſe of, the reaſon and equity of this complaint is evident, and GOD is acquitted, as having done what was needful on his part, and the ſinner juſtly condemned, for not concurring with the grace of GOD as he might have done; which ſhews that we are not meerly paſſive in this work, but ſomething is expected from us, after GOD hath done his part, which if we neglect to do, " our deſtruction " is of our ſelves." Whereas the contrary ſuppoſition, upon pretence of glorifying GOD's grace, by making him to do all in the converſion of ſinners,

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indangers the honour of his juſtice, by laying the impenitency of ſinners, and their ruin conſequent upon it, at his door; which is to advance one attribute of GOD upon the ruin of another; whereas it is a fundamental principle of religion, to take care to reconcile the attributes and perfections of GOD to one another; for that is not a divine perfection, which contradicts any other perfection.

The 3d objection is grounded upon that queſtion of St. Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 7. "Who maketh thee to "differ," which they think impoſſible to be anſwer'd, if the efficacy of God's grace depend upon our concurrence and compliance with it. For, ſay they, when GOD offers his grace to two perſons for their repentance, if the true reaſon why the one repents, and the other remains impenitent, be this, that the one complieth with this grace of GOD, and yieldeth to it, the other reſiſts and ſtands out againſt it; then it is not the grace of GOD which makes the difference, for that is equal to both, but ſomething in themſelves, and ſo it is not GOD that makes them to differ, but they themſelves.

But this queſtion is impertinent to this caſe. The apoſtle ſpeaks it concerning ſpiritual gifts, upon account of which, they factiouſly admir'd ſome of the apoſtles above others, and concerning them the queſtion is very proper, "who maketh thee to dif-"fer?" Miraculous gifts were ſo order'd by GOD, that men were meerly paſſive in the receiving of them, and contributed nothing to the obtaining of them; and therefore if one had greater gifts than another, it was meerly the pleaſure of GOD that made the difference. But the caſe is not the ſame

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in the graces of GOD's SPIRIT, towards the obtaining and improving whereof, we our selves may contribute something; our SAVIOUR having assur'd us, that "to him that hath, shall be given." And here the question is not proper, nor is it true "that "the grace of GOD makes all the difference." It is indeed the foundation of all the good that is in us: but our different improvement makes different attainments in grace and goodness. Among those to whom the talents were intrusted, what made the difference between the man "who wrapt his talent "in the napkin, and buried it," and those "who "gained double by theirs," but that the one improv'd the grace conferr'd on him, the other neglected it, and this without any manner of reflexion upon, or diminution of the grace of GOD, or any danger from St. Paul's question; "who maketh thee to "differ?" Put the case a pardon is offered to two malefactors, the one accepts, the other refuses it; "their own choice makes the difference between "them;" but he that is saved is nevertheless beholden to the king's pardon for his life, and it were a senseless ingratitude in him, because he accepts the pardon, when the other refuseth it, to say that he did not owe his life to the grace and favour of his prince, but might thank himself for it; whereas that he was in a capacity to accept a pardon, was wholly due to the clemency of his prince, who offer'd it to him when he no wise deserved it. In this case the thing plainly appears as it is, by which every man may see, that it is against common sense to pretend that the grace of GOD is destroyed, if there be any compliance on our part with it; that it is no grace,

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grace, if it be not forc'd upon us, and we be not meerly paſſive in the reception of it. I proceed in the

Second place, to give a clear ſtate of this matter, ſo as is moſt agreeable to the doctrine of the holy ſcriptures, and the eſſential attributes and perfections of GOD. In order to which, I will give you a ſhort view of the ſeveral opinions concerning this matter. And there are two extreme, and two middle opinions, concerning the operation of GOD's grace in the converſion of a ſinner.

The firſt of the extreme opinions is that which all this while I have been arguing againſt, namely, that all that are converted and regenerated, are wrought upon in an irreſiſtible manner, and are meerly paſſive in it; and that thoſe who are not thus wrought upon, their repentance and converſion is impoſſible. What the inconveniencies of this opinion are, I have ſhewed at large.

The other extreme opinion is, that none are thus wrought upon, becauſe it would be a violence and injury to man's natural liberty; but that ſufficient grace is offered to all, one time or other, who live under the goſpel, which they may comply with or reſiſt, and conſequently if they be not brought to repentance, their impenitency and ruin is the effect of their own choice, and GOD is "free from the blood "of all men." But this opinion, tho' infinitely more reaſonable than the other, ſeems not to have any neceſſary foundation either in ſcripture or reaſon. There are ſome inſtances in ſcripture of the converſion of men after a very violent, if not an irreſiſtible manner, which ſeems to be attributed to

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a particular predeſtination of GOD; as that of St. Paul, who ſays of himſelf, Gal. i. 15. "that he was ſepa- "rated from his mother's womb to that work to "which he was called;" and the manner of his converſion was anſwerable to ſuch a predeſtination; and there is nothing in reaſon againſt this, ſince it is no injury to any man to be made good and happy againſt his will. SERM. CVIII.

The two middle opinions are theſe.

Firſt, that irreſiſtible grace is afforded to all the elect, and ſufficient grace to all others who live under the goſpel (for of thoſe only we ſpeak, the caſe of others being peculiar, and belonging to the extraordinary mercy of GOD) but then they ſay, that none of thoſe to whom this ſufficient grace is afforded ſhall effectually comply with it and be ſaved. This opinion ſeems more moderate, and hath this advantage in it, that it acquits the juſtice of GOD in the condemnation of thoſe, who having ſufficient grace afforded to them, did yet notwithſtanding continue impenitent; but yet it hath two great inconveniencies in it.

Firſt, that this ſuppoſition is to no purpoſe, as to any real effect for the ſalvation of men, becauſe not one perſon more is ſaved, notwithſtanding this univerſal ſufficient grace, which they ſay is afforded to all; for they take it for granted it is never effectual, and then it ſeems very unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, that a means ſufficient to its end ſhould univerſally prove ineffectual; nay, on the contrary, it is next to a demonſtration againſt the ſufficiency of a means if perpetually and in all inſtances it fails of its end. This would tempt any man to think,

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that ſurely there is ſome defect in it, or ſomething that hinders the efficacy of it; if being perpetually and generally afforded, it doth perpetually and univerſally miſcarry, without ſo much as one inſtance among ſo many millions to the contrary. So that this opinion ſeems rather to be contrived for a colour and ſhelter againſt ſome abſurdity, which men know not how to avoid otherwiſe, than to ſerve any good purpoſe, or to be embraced for the truth and probability of it.

The other middle opinion is, that ſome are converted in an irreſiſtible manner, when GOD pleaſeth, and whom he deſigns to be extraordinary examples, and inſtruments for the good of others, and that ſufficient grace is afforded to others, which is effectual to the ſalvation of many, and rejected by a great many. And this avoids all the inconveniency of the other opinion, and is evidently moſt agreeable both to the tenor of ſcripture and to the beſt notions which men have concerning the attributes and perfections of GOD, and gives greateſt encouragement to the endeavours of men. It agrees very well with the ſolemn declarations of ſcripture, that GOD is not wanting on his part to afford men ſufficient means to bring them to repentance; that he "deſires not the death of a ſinner, but rather that "he ſhould turn from his wickedneſs and live;" that "he would have all men to be ſaved, and "to come to the knowledge of the truth;" that "he would not that any ſhould periſh, but that "all ſhould come to repentance;" that "mens "deſtruction is of themſelves." And this makes all the exhortations and motives of ſcripture to repentance

pentance to be of ſome force and ſignificancy, and gives encouragement to the reſolutions and endeavours of men to become better. This clearly acquits the juſtice of GOD in the condemnation of impenitent ſinners, and fixeth the reaſon of their ruin upon their own choice. This perfectly reconciles the operation and aſſiſtance of GOD's grace in our converſion and regeneration, in our ſanctification and perſeverance in a good courſe, with the concurrence of our own endeavours, and makes thoſe plain texts of ſcripture have ſome ſenſe and ſignificancy in them; "work out your own ſalva-"tion; repent and turn yourſelves from all your "evil ways; make ye new hearts and new ſpirits." Theſe are more than a thouſand metaphors to convince a man that we may and ought to do ſomething towards our repentance and converſion. And if any man be ſure that we neither do nor can do any thing in this work, then I am ſure that theſe texts ſignify nothing. Finally, thoſe texts which ſpeak moſt clearly of the neceſſity of the divine grace and aſſiſtance, to our doing of any thing that is ſpiritually good, do ſuppoſe ſomething to be done on our part. That of our SAVIOUR, "without me ye can do nothing," implies that with his grace and aſſiſtance we can. That of St. Paul, "I am able to do all things through CHRIST "ſtrengthning me," implies, that what we do by the ſtrength of CHRIST is truly our own act; "I "am able to do all things." And this does not in the leaſt prejudice nor obſcure the glory of GOD's grace. St. Paul it ſeems knew very well how to reconcile theſe two, and to give the grace of GOD

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its due, without rejecting all concurrence of our own induſtry and endeavour, 1 Cor. xv. 10. "But "by the grace of God I am what I am; and his "grace which was beſtowed upon me was not "in vain;" not becauſe it was irreſiſtible, and he merely paſſive in the reception of it; but becauſe he did concur and co-operate with it. So he tells us, "his grace that was beſtowed upon me was "not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly "than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God "which was with me." So that our concurrence and endeavour in the doing of any thing that is good, does not derogate from the grace of God, provided that we aſcribe the good which we do to the aſſiſtance of divine grace, to which it is incomparably more due, than to our own activity and endeavour. And ſo St. Paul does, "I labour'd "abundantly; yet not I, but the grace of God, "which was with me."

So that the glory of God's grace may be advanced to its due pitch, without aſſerting that we are merely paſſive to the operations of it. God's grace may be abundantly beſtowed upon us, and yet we may "labour abundantly;" "God may work in "us to will and to do," and yet "we may work "out our own ſalvation." I have done with the ſecond doctrine grounded upon this metaphor of "a new creature."

SERMON

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Of the nature of regeneration, and its neceſſity, in order to juſtification and ſalvation.

GALAT. vi. 15.

For in CHRIST JESUS, *neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion; but a new creature.*

IN diſcourſing on theſe words, that which I was laſt upon was to ſhew, that this metaphor of "a new creature" doth not import what ſome would extend it to, and that ſo as to found doctrines of great conſequence upon the ſingle ſtrength of this, and other like metaphors, viz. ſuch doctrines as theſe three, SERM. CIX. The fourth ſermon on this text.

Firſt, that as the creation was by an irreſiſtible act of the divine power, ſo is this new creation, or the converſion of a ſinner.

Secondly, that as creatures were merely paſſive in their being made, and contributed nothing at all thereto, no more do we to our converſion and regeneration.

Thirdly, that as the creation was in an inſtant, only by the powerful word of GOD, ſo this new creation is in an inſtant, and admits of no degrees. The two firſt of theſe I have ſpoken to, and ſhewed, that as they had no neceſſary foundation in this and the like metaphors of ſcripture, ſo they are contrary to reaſon

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reaſon and experience, and the plain and conſtant tenor of ſcripture, which is the rule and meaſure of CHRIST'S doctrine. I proceed now to conſider the

Third doctrine, which is grounded upon this metaphor, namely, that as the creation of the ſeveral ranks and orders of creatures was in an inſtant, and effected by the powerful word of GOD, ſaying, "let "ſuch and ſuch things be," and immediately they were; ſo this new creation is in an inſtant, and admits of no ſteps and degrees. And this doctrine is nothing elſe but a farther purſuit of the metaphor; and admitting the two former doctrines to be true, and well-grounded upon this metaphor, this third doctrine follows well enough from them; for it is agreeable enough, that that which is effected by an irreſiſtible act of omnipotence, without any concurrence or operation on our part, ſhould be done in an inſtant and all at once. Not that this is neceſſary, but that it is reaſonable; for why ſhould omnipotence uſe delays, and take time and proceed by degrees in the doing of that, which with the ſame eaſe it can do at once, and in an inſtant; eſpecially conſidering how well this ſuits with the other metaphors of ſcripture, as well as with this of "a new "creation," viz. the metaphor of "regeneration, "and reſurrection." A child is born at once, and the dead ſhall be raiſed "in a moment, in the twinkling "of an eye."

But notwithſtanding all this plauſible appearance and conſpiracy of metaphors, I ſhall ſhew that this doctrine of the converſion and regeneration of a ſinner being effected in an inſtant, and all at once, is not

not well grounded either upon ſcripture, or experience. Not but that GOD can do ſo if he pleaſeth, and work this change in ſome much ſooner and quicker than in others; but there is nothing either in ſcripture or experience to perſuade us that this is the uſual, much leſs the conſtant and unalterable method of GOD's grace in the converſion of a ſinner, to bring it about in an inſtant, without any ſenſible ſteps and degrees.

But for the full clearing of this matter, I ſhall proceed by theſe ſteps.

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew upon what miſtaken grounds and principles this doctrine relies; beſides the metaphors already mention'd, which I have ſhewn to be of no force to prove the thing.

Secondly, I ſhall plainly ſhew what regeneration is; by which it will appear, that it is not neceſſarily effected in an inſtant, and at once, but admits of degrees.

Thirdly, that it is evidently ſo in experience of the ordinary method of GOD's grace, both in thoſe who are regenerated by a pious and religious education, and in thoſe who are reclaimed from a vitious courſe of life.

Fourthly, that all this is very conſonant and agreeable to what the ſcripture plainly and conſtantly declares concerning it.

Firſt, I ſhall diſcover ſeveral miſtakes upon which this doctrine is grounded, beſides the metaphors already mention'd, and which I have ſhewn to be of no force to prove the thing, viz. that regeneration is in an inſtant, and admits of no degrees. As

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1. That regeneration and ſanctification are not only different expreſſions, but do ſignify two things really different. But this is a groſs miſtake; for regeneration and ſanctification are but different expreſſions of the ſelf ſame thing; for regeneration is a metaphor which the ſcripture uſeth to expreſs our tranſlation and change from one ſtate to another, from a ſtate of ſin and wickedneſs, to a ſtate of grace and holineſs, as if we were born over again, and were the children of another father, and from being the children of the devil, did become the children of GOD; and ſanctification is our being made holy, our being purified and cleanſed from ſin and impurity. And hence it is that regeneration and ſanctification are attributed to the ſame cauſes, principal, and inſtrumental, to the SPIRIT of GOD, and to the word of GOD; we are ſaid "to be born of the "SPIRIT," and to be "ſanctified by the HOLY "GHOST; to be begotten of the word of truth, and "to be ſactified by the truth," which is the word of GOD. So that the ſcripture ſpeaks of them as the ſame thing; and they muſt needs be ſo; for if ſanctification be the making of us holy, and regeneration maketh us holy; then regeneration is ſanctification.

2. It is ſaid, that regeneration only ſignifies our firſt entrance into this ſtate, and ſanctification our progreſs and continuance in it. But this likewiſe is a great miſtake. For tho' it be true, that regeneration doth ſignify our firſt entrance into this ſtate, yet it is not true, that it only ſignifies that; for it is uſed likewiſe in ſcripture to ſignify our continuance in that ſtate; for chriſtians are ſaid to be the children of GOD, and conſequently in a regene-

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rate state, not only in the instant of this change, but during their continuance in it. Besides that our first change is as well call'd our sanctification, as our progress and continuance in a state of holiness. So that neither in this is there any difference between regeneration and sanctification. They do both of them signify both our first entrance into an holy state, and our continuance and progress in it; tho' regeneration do more frequently denote the making of this change, and our first entrance into it. SERM. CIX.

3. It is said that one of the main differences between regeneration and sanctification is this, that regeneration is incapable of degrees, and all that are regenerate are equally so, and one regenerate person is not more or less regenerate than another; whereas sanctification is a gradual progress from one degree of holiness to another, and of them that are truly sanctified and holy, one may be more sanctified and more holy than another. But this likewise is a meer fancy and imagination, without any real ground. For as an unregenerate state does plainly admit of degrees, so likewise doth the regenerate, and for the same reason. That an unregenerate state admits of degrees, is evident, in that some unregenerate persons are more wicked than others, and thereby more "the children of wrath, and the devil," than others, which are the scripture expressions concerning the degrees of mens wickedness and impiety. In like manner, they that are more holy, and more like GOD, are more the children of GOD; and to be more a child of GOD, is surely to be more regenerate, that is, more renewed after the image of GOD, which

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conſiſts " in righteouſneſs, and true holineſs." So that it is a meer precarious aſſertion, and evidently falſe to affirm, that regeneration doth not admit of degrees, and that one is not more regenerate than another.

4thly, and laſtly, they ground this conceit upon the doctrine of the ſchools, which teach, that in regeneration and converſion all the habits of grace are infuſed, *ſimul & ſemel*, " together, and at once." I confeſs I have no regard, much leſs a veneration for the doctrine of the ſchools, where it differs from that of the holy ſcriptures, which ſay not one word of infuſed habits, which yet are much talk'd of in divinity; and to ſpeak the truth, theſe words ſerve only to obſcure the thing. For to ſay that in converſion the habits of all graces and virtues are infuſed together and at once, is to ſay, that in an inſtant men that were vicious before in ſeveral kinds, are by an omnipotent act of GOD's grace, and by a new principle infuſed into them, endued with the habits of the contrary graces and virtues, and are as chaſte, and temperate, and juſt, and meek, and humble, as if by the frequent practice of theſe virtues they had become ſo. That this may be, and ſometimes is, I am ſo far from denying, that I believe it to be ſo. Some men, by an extraordinary power of GOD's grace upon their hearts, are ſuddenly changed, and ſtrangely reclaimed from a very wicked and vicious, to a very religious and virtuous courſe of life, and that which others attain to by ſlower degrees, and great conflicts with themſelves, before they can gain the upper

per hand of their lusts, these arrive at all on a sud- SERM. CIX.
den, by a mighty resolution wrought in them by the power of GOD's grace, and as it were a new bias and inclination put upon their souls, equal to an habit gain'd by long use and custom. This GOD sometimes does, and when he does this, it may in some sense be call'd "the infusion of the "habits of grace and virtue together, and at once;" because the man is hereby endowed with a principle of equal force and power with habits that are acquir'd by long use and practice. A strong and vigorous faith is the principle and root of all graces and virtues, and may have such a powerful influence upon the resolutions of our minds, and the government of our actions, that from this principle all graces and virtues may spring and grow up by degrees into habits; but then this principle is not formally but virtually, in the power and efficacy of it; "the infusion of the habits of "grace and virtue;" and even in those persons in whom this change is so suddenly, and as it were at once, I doubt not but that the habits of several graces and virtues are afterwards attained by the frequent practice of them, in the virtue of this powerful principle of the faith of the gospel, as I shall shew in the progress of this discourse. And this I doubt not was very frequent and visible in many of the first converts to christianity; especially of those, who from the abominable idolatry and impiety of heathenism were gained to the christian religion. The SPIRIT of GOD did then work very miraculously, as well in the cures of spiritual as

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of bodily diſeaſes. But then to make this the rule and ſtandard of GOD's ordinary proceedings in the converſion and regeneration of men, is equally unreaſonable, as ſtill to expect miracles for the cure of diſeaſes; and 'tis certain in experience, that this is not GOD's ordinary method in the converſion of ſinners, as I ſhall fully ſhew by and by.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew what regeneration is, by which it will plainly appear, that there is no neceſſity that it ſhould be effected in an inſtant, and at once, but that it will admit of degrees. I do not deny that it may be in an inſtant, and at once. The power of GOD is able to do this, and ſometimes does it very thoroughly, and very ſuddenly. But the queſtion is, whether there be a neceſſity it ſhould be ſo, and always be ſo. Now regeneration is the change of a man's ſtate, from a ſtate of ſin to a ſtate of holineſs; which becauſe it is an entrance upon a new kind or courſe of life, it is fitly reſembled to regeneration, or a new birth; to a new creation, the man being as it were quite chang'd or made over again, ſo as not to be, as to the main purpoſe and deſign of his life, the ſame man he was before. This is a plain ſenſible account of the thing, which every one may eaſily underſtand. Now there is nothing in reaſon, why a man may not gradually be changed and arrive at this ſtate by degrees; as well as after this change is made, and he arrived at this ſtate of a regenerate man, he may by degrees grow and improve in it. But the latter no man doubts of, but that a man that is in a ſtate of grace, may grow and improve

in

in grace; and there is as little reaſon to queſtion why a man may not come to this ſtate by degrees, as well as leap into it at once. SERM. CIX.

All the difficulty I know of in this matter, is a meer nicety, that there is an inſtant; in which every thing begins, and therefore regeneration is in an inſtant; ſo that the inſtant before the man arrived at this ſtate, it could not be ſaid that he was regenerate; and the inſtant after he is in this ſtate, it cannot be denied that he is ſo. But this is idle ſubtilty, juſt as if a man ſhould prove that an houſe was built in an inſtant, becauſe it could not be ſaid to be built, 'till the inſtant it was finiſh'd; tho' for all this nothing is more certain than that it was built by degrees. Or, ſuppoſe the time of arriving at man's eſtate be at one and twenty, does it from hence follow, that a man does not grow to be a man by degrees, but is made a man in an inſtant; becauſe juſt before one and twenty he was not at man's eſtate, and juſt then he was? not but that GOD, if he pleaſe, can make a man in an inſtant, as he did Adam; but it is not neceſſary from this example, that all men ſhould be made ſo, much leſs does it follow from this vain ſubtilty. This is juſt the caſe. All the while the man is tending towards a regenerate ſtate, and is ſtruggling with his luſts, 'till by the power of GOD's grace, and his own reſolution, he get the victory; all the while he is under the ſenſe and conviction of his ſinful and miſerable ſtate, and ſorrowing for the folly of his paſt life, and coming to an effectual purpoſe and reſolution of changing his courſe; and it may be ſeveral times thrown back by the temptations of the devil, and the

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the power of evil habits, and the weakneſs and inſtability of his own purpoſe; 'till at laſt, by the grace of GOD following and aſſiſting him, he comes to a firm reſolution of a better life, which reſolution governs him for the future; I ſay all this while, which in ſome perſons is longer, in other ſhorter, according to the power of evil habits, and the different degrees of GOD's grace afforded to men; all this time the work of regeneration is going on; and tho' a man cannot be ſaid to be in a regenerate ſtate, 'till that very inſtant that the principle of grace and his good reſolution have got the upper hand of his luſts, yet it is certain for all this, that the work of regeneration was not effected in an inſtant. This is plainly and truly the caſe, as I ſhall ſhew in the

Third particular I propounded, namely, that it is evident from experience of the ordinary methods of GOD's grace, both in thoſe who are regenerated by a pious and religious education, and thoſe who are reclaimed from a vicious courſe of life.

The firſt ſort, namely thoſe who are brought to goodneſs by a religious and virtuous education; theſe (at leaſt, ſo far as my obſervation reacheth) make up a very conſiderable part of the number of the regenerate, that is, of good men. And tho' it be certain, conſidering the univerſal corruption and degeneracy of humane nature, that there is a real change made in them, by the operation of GOD's grace upon their minds, yet it is as certain in experience, that this change is made in very many, by very ſilent and inſenſible degrees, 'till at length the

the seeds of religion, which were planted in them by a good education, do visibly prevail over all the evil inclinations of corrupt nature, so as to sway and govern the actions of their lives; and when the principles of grace and goodness do apparently prevail, we may conclude them to be in a regenerate state, tho' perhaps very few of these can give any account of the particular time and occasion of this change. For things may be seen in their effect, which were never very sensible in their cause. And it is very reasonable, that such persons who never lived in any evil course, should escape those pangs and terrors which unavoidably happen unto others, from a course of actual sin, and the guilt of a wicked life; and if there be any such persons as I have described, who are in this gradual and insensible manner regenerated, and made good, this is a demonstration, that there is no necessity that this change should be in an instant, it being so frequently found to be otherwise in experience.

And as for others, who are visibly reclaimed from a notorious wicked course, in these we likewise frequently see this change gradually made, by strong impressions made upon their minds, most frequently by the word of GOD; sometimes by his providence, whereby they are convinc'd of the evil and danger of their course, and awakened to consideration, and melted into sorrow and repentance, and perhaps exercis'd with great terrors of conscience, till at length by the grace of GOD, they come to a fixt purpose and resolution of forsaking their sins, and turning to GOD; and

after

after many ſtrugglings and conflicts with their luſts, and the ſtrong bias of evil habits, this reſolution aſſiſted by the grace of GOD, doth effectually prevail, and make a real change both in the temper of their minds, and the courſe of their lives; and when this is done, and not before, they are ſaid to be regenerate. But all the while this was a doing, the new man was forming, and the work of regeneration was going on; and it was perhaps a very conſiderable time from the firſt beginning of it, till it came to a fixt and ſettled ſtate. And this I doubt not in experience of moſt perſons who are reclaim'd from a vicious courſe of life, is found to be the uſual and ordinary method of GOD's grace in their converſion. And if ſo, it is in vain to pretend that a thing is done in an inſtant, which by ſo manifold experience is found to take up a great deal of time, and to be effected by degrees.

And whereas ſome men are pleaſed to call all this the preparatory work to regeneration, but not the regeneration it ſelf, this is an idle contention about words. For if theſe preparations be a degree of goodneſs, and a gradual tendency towards it, then the work is begun by them, and during the continuance of them, is all the while a doing; and tho' it be hard to fix the point or inſtant when a man juſt arrives at this ſtate, and not before, yet it is very ſenſible when a man is in it, and this change when it is really made, will ſoon diſcover itſelf by plain and ſenſible effects.

Fourthly,

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Fourthly, and laſtly, all this is very agreeable to the plain and conſtant tenor of ſcripture, Iſa. i. 16. where the prophet exhorts to this change, he ſpeaks of it as a gradual thing, "waſh ye, make you "clean, put away the evil of your doings from be- "fore mine eyes; ceaſe to do evil, learn to do "well;" that is, break off evil and vicious habits, and gain the contrary habits of virtue and goodneſs by the exerciſe of it. The ſcripture ſpeaks of ſome, as farther from a ſtate of grace than others, Jer. xiii. 23. "Can the ethiopian change his skin, or "the leopard his ſpots? then may ye alſo do good, "that are accuſtomed to do evil;" plainly declaring the great difficulty, equal almoſt to a natural impoſſibility, of reclaiming thoſe to goodneſs, who have been long habituated to an evil courſe. And the ſcripture ſpeaks of ſome as nearer to a ſtate of grace than others. Our SAVIOUR tells the young man in the goſpel, who ſaid "he had kept the "commands of GOD from his youth;" that "he "was not far from the kingdom of GOD." But now if by an irreſiſtible act of GOD's power, this change be made in an inſtant, and cannot otherwiſe be made, how is one man nearer to a ſtate of grace, or farther from it than another? if all that are made good, muſt be made ſo in an inſtant or not at all, then no man is nearer being made good than another; for if he were nearer to it, he might ſooner be made ſo; but that cannot be, if all muſt be made good in an inſtant; for ſooner than that no man can be made ſo. If the ſimilitude of our "being dead "in ſins and treſpaſſes" be ſtrictly taken, no man is

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nearer a reſurrection to a new life than another; as he that died but a week ago, is as far from being raiſed to life again, as he that died a thouſand years ago; the reſurrection of both requires an omnipotent act, and to that both are equally eaſy.

The two parables of our SAVIOUR, Matth. xiii. 31, 33. are by many interpreters underſtood of the gradual operation of grace upon the hearts of men. "That wherein the kingdom of heaven is likened "to a grain of muſtard-ſeed, which being ſown was "the leaſt of all ſeeds," but by degrees "grew up "to be the greateſt of herbs;" and "to leaven, "which a woman took and hid in three meaſures of "meal, till the whole was leavened:" intimating the progreſs of GOD's grace, which by degrees diffuſeth it ſelf over the whole temper of a man's mind, into all the actions of his life. To be ſure the parable of "the ſeed which fell upon good ground," does repreſent the efficacy of the word of GOD, accompanied by his grace upon the minds of men, and that is ſaid "to ſpring up and increaſe, and to "bring forth fruit with patience;" which ſurely does expreſs to us the gradual operation of GOD's word and grace in the renovation and change of a man's heart and life.

The new teſtament indeed ſpeaks of the ſudden change of many upon the firſt preaching of the goſpel, which I have told you before it is not a ſtandard of the ordinary method of GOD's grace, the not conſidering of which, hath been a great cauſe of all the miſtakes in this matter. 'Tis true, thoſe which were thus converted to the belief of the goſpel, their faith

faith was a virtual principle of all grace and virtue, tho' not formally the habit of every particular grace. St. Paul himſelf, who was a prime inſtance of this kind, ſpeaks as if he acquir'd the grace of contentment by great conſideration, and diligent care of himſelf in ſeveral conditions; not as if the habit of this grace had been infuſed into him at once, Philip. iv. 11, 12. "I have learn'd in whatſoever ſtate I am, "therewith to be content. I know both how to be "abaſed, and I know how to abound; every where "and in all things I am inſtructed, both to be full, "and to be hungry; both to abound, and to ſuffer "need." And thus I have done with the firſt thing I propounded to conſider, namely, the true and juſt importance of this metaphor of "the new "creation." The two particulars which remain, I ſhall by GOD's aſſiſtance finiſh in my next diſcourſe.

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SERMON CX.

Of the nature of regeneration, and its neceſſity, in order to juſtification and ſalvation.

GALAT. vi. 15.

For in CHRIST JESUS, *neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion; but a new creature.*

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THE obſervation I am ſtill upon from theſe words is this, viz. that in the chriſtian religion nothing will avail to our juſtification, but the renovation of our hearts and lives, expreſt here by "a new creature." In treating of which, I propos'd the doing of three things.

The fifth ſermon on this text.

Firſt, to ſhew the true import of this metaphor of "a new creature."

Secondly, to ſhew that this is the great condition of our juſtification; and,

Thirdly, that it is highly reaſonable that it ſhould be ſo.

In treating of the firſt of theſe particulars, I have conſidered ſome doctrines as founded upon this metaphor, which I have ſhewn at large not only to have no foundation in ſcripture, or reaſon, or experience; but alſo to be very unreaſonable in themſelves, and contrary to the plain and conſtant tenor of ſcripture, and to the ordinary method of GOD's grace in

in the regeneration of men, whether by a religious and virtuous education, or in thoſe who are reclaim'd from a notorious wicked courſe of life. And that I have ſo long inſiſted upon this argument, and handled it in a more contentious way than is uſual with me, did not proceed from any love to controverſy, which I am leſs fond of every day than other; but from a great deſire to put an end to theſe controverſies, and quarrellings in the dark, by bringing them to a clear ſtate and plain iſſue, and likewiſe to undeceive good men concerning ſome current notions and doctrines, which I do really believe to be diſhonourable to GOD, and contrary to the plain declarations of ſcripture, and a cauſe of great perplexity and diſcomfort to the minds of men, and a real diſcouragement to the reſolutions and endeavours of becoming better. Upon which conſiderations I was ſtrongly urgent to ſearch theſe doctrines to the bottom, and to contribute what in me lay, to the reſcuing of good men from the diſquiet and entanglement of them. SERM. CX.

I will conclude this matter with a few cautions, not unworthy to be remember'd by us, that we would be careful ſo to aſcribe all good to GOD; that we be ſure we aſcribe nothing to him that is evil, or any ways unworthy of him; that we do not make him the ſole author of our ſalvation, in ſuch a way, as will unavoidably charge upon him the final impenitency and ruin of a great part of mankind; that we do not ſo magnify the grace of GOD, as to make his precepts and exhortations

ſignify

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ſignify nothing; ſuch as theſe, "make ye new "hearts, and new ſpirits: ſtrive to enter in at the "ſtrait gate;" where, if by the ſtrait gate be meant the difficulty of our firſt entrance upon a religious courſe, that is of our converſion and regeneration, I cannot imagine how it is poſſible to reconcile our being meerly paſſive in this work, and doing nothing at all in it, with our SAVIOUR's precept of "ſtriving to enter in at the ſtrait "gate;" unleſs to be very active, and to be meerly paſſive about the ſame thing be all one, and an earneſt contention and endeavour be the ſame thing with doing nothing. Again, that we do not make the utmoſt degeneracy and depravation which men ever arrived at by the greateſt abuſe of themſelves, and the moſt vile and wicked practices, the ſtandard of an unregenerate ſtate, and of the common condition of all men by nature. And laſtly, that we do not make ſome particular inſtances in ſcripture, of the ſtrange and ſudden converſion of ſome perſons (as namely, of St. Paul and the jailor in the Acts) the common rule and meaſure of every man's converſion; ſo that unleſs a man be as it were ſtruck down by a light and power from heaven, and taken with a fit of trembling, and frighted almoſt out of his wits, or find in himſelf ſomething equal to this, he can have no aſſurance of his converſion; whereas a much ſurer judgment may be made of the ſincerity of a man's converſion, by the real effects of this change, than by the manner of it. This our SAVIOUR hath taught us, by that apt reſemblance of the operation of GOD's

SPIRIT

SPIRIT to "the blowing of the wind," of the original cauſe whereof, and of the reaſon of its ceaſing or continuance, and why it blows ſtronger or gentler, this way or that way, we are altogether ignorant; but that it is, we are ſenſible from the ſound of it, John iii. 8. "The wind bloweth where "it liſteth, and thou heareſt the ſound of it, but "canſt not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it "goeth: ſo is every one that is born of the SPI-"RIT." The effects of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT in the regeneration of men are ſenſible, tho' the manner and degrees of his operation upon the ſouls of men are ſo various, that we can give no account of them; by which, one would think our SAVIOUR had ſufficiently caution'd us, not to reduce the operations of GOD's grace and HOLY SPIRIT in the regeneration of men, to any certain rule or ſtandard, but chiefly to regard the ſenſible effects of this ſecret work upon the hearts and lives of men.

And after all, it is in vain to contend by any arguments againſt clear and certain experience. If we plainly ſee that many are inſenſibly changed, and made good by pious education, "in the nurture "and admonition of the LORD," and that ſome who have long lived in a profane neglect and contempt of religion, are by the ſecret power of GOD's word and HOLY SPIRIT, upon calm conſideration, without any great terrors and amazement, viſibly changed and brought to a better mind and courſe; it is in vain in theſe caſes to pretend that this change is not real, becauſe the manner of it is not anſwerable to

ſome

SERM. CX. ſome inſtances which are recorded in ſcripture, or which we have obſerv'd in our experience, and becauſe theſe perſons cannot give ſuch an account of the time and manner of their converſion, as is agreeable to theſe inſtances; which is juſt as if I ſhould meet a man beyond ſea, whom I had known in England, and would not believe that he had croſt the ſeas, becauſe he ſaid he had a ſmooth and eaſy paſſage, and was wafted over by a gentle wind, and could tell no ſtories of ſtorms and tempeſts.

And thus I have fully and faithfully endeavour'd to open to you the juſt importance of this phraſe or expreſſion in the text, of "the new creature," or "the new creation." I proceed to the

Second particular I propounded, namely, that the real renovation of our hearts and lives, is according to the terms of the goſpel, and the chriſtian religion, the great condition of our juſtification and acceptance with GOD, and that this is the ſame in ſenſe and ſubſtance with thoſe phraſes in the parallel texts to this, of "faith perfected by charity," and of "keeping the commandments of GOD."

That according to the terms of the goſpel, the great condition of our juſtification and acceptance with GOD, is the real renovation of our hearts and lives, is plain, not only from this text, which affirms, that in the chriſtian religion nothing will avail us but "the new creature;" but likewiſe from many other clear texts of ſcripture; and this, whether by juſtification be meant our firſt juſtification upon our faith and repentance, or our continuance in this ſtate, or our final juſtification by our

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ſolemn acquital and abſolution at the great day, which in ſcripture is called "ſalvation, and eternal "life." SERM. CX.

That this is the condition of our firſt juſtification, that is, of the forgiveneſs of our ſins, and our being received into the grace and favour of GOD, is plain from all thoſe texts, where this change is expreſt by our "repentance and converſion," by our "regeneration and renovation," by our puri-"fication and ſanctification," or by any other terms of the like importance. For under every one of theſe notions, this change is made the condition of the forgiveneſs of our ſins, and acceptance to the favour of GOD.

Under the notion of "repentance and converſion," Acts ii. 38. "Repent and be baptized every "one of you in the name of JESUS CHRIST, for "the remiſſion of ſins." Acts iii. 19. "Repent, "and be converted, that your ſins may be blotted "out." Upon the ſame account, the penitent acknowledgment of our ſins, which is an eſſential part of repentance, is made a condition of the forgiveneſs of them, 1 John i. 9. "If we confeſs our "ſins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins, "and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs." Under the notion of "regeneration and renovation," 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any man be in CHRIST," that is, become a true chriſtian, which is all one with being in a juſtified ſtate; "he is a new creature; "old things are paſt away, behold all things are "become new." Tit. iii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. where the apoſtle declares at large, what change is requir'd to

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put us into a juſtified ſtate, and to entitle us to the inheritance of eternal life. "For we our ſelves "were alſo ſometimes fooliſh, diſobedient, deceived, "ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures, living in ma- "lice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. "But after that the kindneſs and love of GOD our "SAVIOUR towards man appeared, not by works of "righteouſneſs which we have done;" that is, not for any precedent righteouſneſs of ours, for we were great ſinners, "but according to his mercy he ſa- "ved us, by the waſhing of regeneration, and the "renewing of the HOLY GHOST, which he ſhed "on us abundantly through JESUS CHRIST our "SAVIOUR, that being juſtified by his grace, we "ſhould be made heirs according to the hope of "eternal life." So that the change of our former temper, and converſion, and regeneration, and "the renewing of the HOLY GHOST," is antece- dently neceſſary to our juſtification, that is, to the pardon of our ſins, and our reſtitution to the fa- vour of GOD, and the hope of eternal life. So likewiſe under the notion of "purification and "ſanctification," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. where the apoſtle enumerates ſeveral ſins and vices; which will certainly exclude men from the favour and kingdom of GOD, from which we muſt be cleanſed, before we can be juſtified or ſaved. "Know ye "not that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the "kingdom of GOD? be not deceived; neither for- "nicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, "nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor "extortioners ſhall inherit the kingdom of GOD.

And

" And ſuch were ſome of you: but ye are waſhed, SERM. CX.
" but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified, in the
" name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of
" our GOD." 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. where the apoſtle likewiſe makes our purification a condition of our being received into the favour of GOD, and reckon'd into the number of his children. " Touch not
" the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and
" will be a father unto you, and ye ſhall be my
" ſons and daughters, ſaith the LORD almighty."
And that by " not touching the unclean thing,"
is here certainly meant our ſanctification and purification from ſin, is evident from what immediately follows in the beginning of the next chapter;
" having therefore theſe promiſes, dearly beloved!
" let us cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of the
" fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of
" GOD;" that is, having this encouragement, that upon this condition we ſhall be received to the favour of God, let us purify our ſelves, that we may be capable of this great bleſſing.

And our continuance in this ſtate of grace and favour with God, depends upon our perſeverance in holineſs; for " if any man draw back, my ſoul ſhall
" have no pleaſure in him."

And laſtly, this is alſo the condition of our final juſtification, and abſolution by the ſentence of the great day, Matth. v. 8. " Bleſſed are the pure in
" heart; for they ſhall ſee GOD." John iii. 3.
" Except a man be born again he cannot ſee the
" kingdom of GOD." Heb. xii. 14. " Follow
" holineſs, without which, no man ſhall ſee the

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" LORD." 1 John iii. 3. The apoſtle there ſpeaking of the bleſſed ſight and enjoyment of GOD, tells us what we muſt do, if ever we hope to be partakers of it; " every man that hath this hope " in him, purifieth himſelf, even as he is pure."

And this condition here mentioned in the text, of our being " new creatures," is the ſame in ſenſe and ſubſtance with thoſe expreſſions which we find in the two parallel texts to this, where " faith " which is perfected by charity, and keeping the " commandments of GOD," are made the condition of our juſtification and acceptance with GOD. Gal. v. 6. " In CHRIST JESUS neither circumci- " ſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion; " but faith, which is conſummate, or made perfect " by charity;" and 1 Cor. vii. 19. " Circumci- " ſion is nothing, and uncircumciſion is nothing; " but the keeping of the commadments of GOD." It is evident that the deſign and meaning of theſe three texts is the ſame, and therefore theſe three expreſſions of " the new creature," and of " faith " perfected by charity, and of " keeping the com- " mandments of GOD," do certainly ſignify the ſame thing. That " the new creature" ſignifies the change of our ſtate, from a ſtate of diſobedience and ſin, to a ſtate of obedience and holineſs of life, I have ſhewn at large; and the apoſtle explaining this " new creation;" moſt expreſly tells us, Eph. ii. 10. " We are his workmanſhip, " created in CHRIST JESUS unto good works, " which GOD hath before ordained, that we ſhould " walk in them;" and Coloſſ. iii. 10, 12, 13, 14. where

14. where the apostle tells them, that they ought to give testimony of their renovation, and having put on "the new man," by all the fruits of obedience and goodness; "ye have put on the new "man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the "image of him that created him. Put on there- "fore as the elect of GOD, holy and beloved, "bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, "meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, "and forgiving one another; and above all these "things put on charity, which is the bond of "perfection." And the apostle St. Peter tells us, that our regeneration, which he calls "sanctifi- "cation of the SPIRIT, is unto obedience," 1 Pet. i. 2. So that our renovation consisteth in the principle and practice of obedience, and a good life; and what is this but "faith perfected by charity?" and charity the apostle tells us "is the fulfilling "of the law;" and what is "the fulfilling of the "law," but "keeping the commandments of "GOD?" And "keeping the commandments of "GOD," or at least a sincere resolution of obedience, when there is not time and opportunity for the trial of it, is in scripture as expressly made a condition both of our present and final justification and acceptance with GOD, as faith is, and in truth is the same with a living and operative faith, and a faith that is consummate, and "made perfect "by charity." Acts x. 34, 35. "Of a truth I "perceive (saith St. Peter) that GOD is no re- "specter of persons, but in every nation he that "feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is ac- "cepted

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" cepted with him;" which ſpeech does as plainly, as words can do any thing, declare to us upon what terms all mankind, of what condition or nation ſoever, may find acceptance with GOD, Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. " Who will render to every " man according to his deeds, to them who by " patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory " and honour, and immortality, eternal life: but " to them who are contentious and obey not the " truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs; indignation and " wrath; tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul " of man that doth evil; of the Jew firſt, and alſo of " Gentile: but glory, honour, and peace to every " man that worketh good, to the Jew firſt, and " alſo to the Gentile." As to our acceptance with GOD, and the rewards of another world, it matters not whether Jew or Gentile, circumciſed or uncircumciſed; that which maketh the difference, is " obeying the truth, or obeying unrighteouſneſs; " working good, or doing evil;" theſe are the things which will avail to our juſtification, or condemnation at the great day. To the ſame purpoſe is that ſaying of the apoſtle to the Hebrews, chap. v. 9. " That CHRIST is the author of eternal ſal- " vation to them that obey him."

I will conclude this matter with two remarkable ſayings, the one towards the beginning, the other towards the end of the bible, to ſatisfy us that this is the tenor of the holy ſcriptures, and the conſtant doctrine of it from the beginning to the end. Gen. iv. 7. It is GOD's ſpeech to Cain, " If " thou doſt well, ſhalt thou not be accepted?"

And

" And Rev. xxii. 14. " Blessed are they who do " his commandments, that they may have right " to the tree of life, and may enter in through " the gates into the city."

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And thus I have done with the second thing I propounded, which was to shew that according to the terms of the gospel, and the christian religion, the real renovation of our hearts and lives is the great condition of our justification and acceptance with GOD, and that this in sense and substance is the same with " faith made perfect by charity, " and keeping the commandments of GOD."

The third and last particular remains to be spoken to, namely, that it is highly reasonable that this should be the condition of our justification, and acceptance to the favour of GOD; and that upon these two accounts.

First, for the honour of GOD's holiness.

Secondly, in order to the qualifying of us for the favour of GOD, and the enjoyment of him, for the pardon of our sins, and the reward of eternal life.

First, for the honour of GOD's holiness. For should GOD have received men to his favour, and rewarded them with eternal glory and happiness, for the meer belief of the gospel, or a confident persuasion that CHRIST would save them without any change of their hearts and lives, " without " repentance from dead works, and fruits meet " for repentance, and amendment of life;" he had not given sufficient testimony to the world of his love to holiness and righteousness, and of his hatred

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tred of ſin and iniquity. The apoſtle tells us, that GOD in the juſtification of a ſinner "declares his "righteouſneſs;" but ſhould he juſtify men upon other terms, this would not "declare his righte- "ouſneſs" and love of holineſs, but rather an indifferency, whether men were good and righteous or not. For a bare aſſent to the truth of the goſpel, without the fruits of holineſs and obedience, is not a living, but a dead faith, and ſo far from being acceptable to GOD, that it is an affront to him; and a confident reliance upon CHRIST for ſalvation, while we continue in our ſins, is not a juſtifying faith, but a bold and impudent preſumption upon the mercy of GOD, and the merits of our SAVIOUR; who indeed "juſtifies the "ungodly," that is, thoſe that have been ſo, but not thoſe that continue ſo. And if GOD ſhould pardon ſinners, and reward them with eternal life, upon any other terms than upon our becoming "new creatures," than upon ſuch "a faith as is "made perfect by charity," that is, "by keeping "the commands of GOD;" this would be ſo far from declaring his righteouſneſs, and being a teſtimony of his hatred and diſpleaſure againſt ſin, that it would give the greateſt countenance and encouragement to it imaginable.

Secondly, it is likewiſe very reaſonable, that ſuch a faith, that makes us "new creatures," and is "perfected by charity, and keeping the command- "ments of GOD," ſhould be the condition of juſtification, in order to the qualifying of us for the pardon of our ſins and the reward of eternal life; that

that is, for the favour of GOD, and for the enjoyment of him. To forgive men upon other terms, were to give countenance and encouragement to perpetual rebellion and disobedience. That man is not fit to be forgiven, who is so far from being sorry for his fault, that he goes on to offend; he is utterly incapable of mercy, who is not sensible that he hath done amiss, and resolved to amend. No prince ever thought a rebellious subject capable of pardon upon lower terms than these. It is in the nature of the thing unfit that an obstinate offender should have any mercy or favour shewn to him.

And as without repentance and resolution of better obedience, we are unfit for forgiveness, so much more for a reward; as we cannot expect GOD's favour, so we are incapable of the enjoyment of him without holiness. Holiness is the image of GOD, and makes us like to him; and 'till we be like him, we cannot see him, we can have no enjoyment of him. All delightful communion and agreeable society is founded in a similitude of disposition and manners, and therefore so long as we are unlike to GOD in the temper and disposition of our minds, and in the actions and course of our lives, neither can GOD take pleasure in us, nor we in him, but there will be a perpetual jarring and discord between him and us; and tho' we were in heaven, and seated in the place of the blessed, yet we should not, nay we could not be happy; because we should want the necessary materials and ingredients of happiness. For it is with the soul in this respect, as it is with the body; tho' all things be easy without us; and no cruelty be exercis'd upon us, to give

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torment and vexation to us, yet if we be inwardly diſeaſed, we may have pain and anguiſh enough, we may be as it were upon the rack, and feel as great torment from the inward diſorder of our humours, as if we were tortur'd from without. So it is with the ſoul, ſin and vice are internal diſeaſes, which do naturally create trouble and diſcontent, and nothing but diverſion, and the variety of objects and pleaſures which entertain men in this world, hinders a wicked man from being out of his wits, whenever he reflects upon himſelf; for all the irregular appetites and paſſions, luſt, and malice, and revenge, are ſo many furies within us; and tho' there were no devil to torment us, yet the diſorder of our own minds, and the horrors of a guilty conſcience would be a hell to us, and make us extremely miſerable in the very regions of happineſs. So that it is neceſſary that our faith ſhould be "made perfect by "charity," and that we ſhould become "new "creatures;" not only from the arbitrary conſtitution and appointment of GOD, but from the nature and reaſon of the thing; becauſe nothing but this can diſpoſe us for that bleſſedneſs, which GOD hath promis'd to us, and prepared for us. Faith conſider'd abſtractedly from the fruits of holineſs and obedience, of goodneſs and charity, will bring no man into the favour with GOD. All the excellency of faith is, that it is the principle of a good life, and furniſheth us with the beſt motives and arguments thereto, the promiſes and threatnings of the goſpel; and therefore in heaven, when we come to ſight and enjoyment, faith and hope ſhall ceaſe, but "cha-

"rity

"sity never faileth;" for if it should, heaven would cease to be heaven to us, because it is the very frame and temper of happiness; and if this disposition be not wrought in us in this world, we shall be altogether incapable of the felicity of the other. SERM. CX.

You see then what it is that must recommend us to the favour of GOD; the real renovation of our hearts and lives, after the image of him that created us. This must be repaired in us, before ever we can hope to be restored to the grace and favour of GOD, or to be capable of the reward of eternal life. And what could GOD have done more reasonable, than to make these very things the terms of our salvation, which are the necessary causes and means of it? how could he have dealt more mercifully and kindly with us, than to appoint that to be the condition of our happiness, which is the only qualification that can make us capable of it?

I will conclude all with that excellent passage in the wisdom of Solomon, chap. vi. 17, 18. "The "very true beginning of wisdom is the desire of "discipline, and the care of discipline is love, and "love is the keeping of her laws, and taking heed "to her laws is the assurance of incorruption." The sum of what I have said upon this argument amounts to this, that upon the terms of the gospel we can have no hope of the forgiveness of our sins, and eternal salvation, unless our nature be renewed, and the image of GOD, which is defaced by sin, be repaired in us, and we be "created in CHRIST "unto good works;" that no faith will avail to our justification and acceptance with GOD, but that

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which is "made perfect by charity," that is, by "fulfilling of the law, and keeping the commandments of GOD;" by sincere obedience and holiness of life, which notwithstanding the unavoidable imperfection of it in this state, will nevertheless be accepted with GOD, through the merits of our blessed SAVIOUR, "who hath loved us, and washed us "from our sins in his own blood." To whom be glory for ever. Amen.

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SERMON LXXXVI.

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2 PET. i. iv. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promiſes; that by theſe ye might be partakers of the divine nature.* p. 1553, 1568.

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1 PET. iv. 19. *Wherefore, let them that ſuffer according to the will of* GOD, *commit the keeping of their ſouls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator.* p. 1580, 1609.

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JOHN ix. 4. *I muſt work the works of him that ſent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work.* p. 1627.

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MICAH vi. 6, 7, 8. *Wherewith ſhall I come before the* LORD, *and bow my ſelf before the high* GOD? *ſhall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old?*

Will

Will the LORD *be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oil? ſhall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul?*

He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD *require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy* GOD. p. 1646.

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GALAT. vi. 15. *For in* CHRIST JESUS, *neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion; but a new creature.*

p. 1731, 1746, 1762, 1777, 1792.

The End of the Sixth Volume.